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# **The Independent Film Community**

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A Report on the Status of Independent Film  
in the United States

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**Edited by Peter Feinstein**

Prepared by the Committee on  
Film and Television Resources and Services



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## Preface

Producing a report on independent film has not been a simple task. Though the term "independent film" has begun to appear with some regularity in the press, concerned individuals and organizations established to serve filmmakers and show their work have not yet arrived at a consensus definition of the independent filmmaker. A descriptive review of this active and growing aspect of American culture has been needed for some time.

Obviously, any collection of individuals calling themselves "independent" would be difficult to describe or quantify. The application of the descriptive term ("independent") is evidence of the unaffiliated and at times maverick nature of these individuals. It is only by observing affiliations with corporate, civil, professional or social organizations that those interested in measuring trends in American culture gather their statistics. Since independent film, by definition, avoids such affiliations it has not activated the indicators that flag emerging trends.

Nevertheless, the continuing growth of independent film is unquestionable. To those involved in various aspects of independent filmmaking, there is no mistaking the vitality and importance of the independent film movement. In recent years organizations devoted to independent film have grown and become increasingly stable. The trend in film education is towards the training of individuals capable of producing films on their own rather than filling a predefined job description in the communications industry. These organizations and individuals are the basis of a coherent system geared to provide a free and open flow of information.

The independent film community is buoyed by hopes for a future in which there is a direct flow of film and video productions from the producer to the consumer. They see the consumer no longer circumscribed by a few production-distribution networks, but able to choose

from a vast array of programming, equal in diversity and accessibility to the inventory of printed materials now in circulation.

The following report was written primarily for the individual who is faced with questions or decisions involving film. Administrators in the educational system, corporate executives, foundation directors, and lawmakers have had no ready interpretation of the workings of the independent film community.

It is hoped that the material gathered in this document will also be of interest to individuals who are either now working in some aspect of film and wish an overview, or who are considering careers as filmmakers.

The report is the product of a lengthy process involving a number of individuals, deeply committed to independent film, who have given freely of their time and energy to produce this document. It was accomplished in three distinct stages:

- 1) A diverse group of individuals held a series of meetings to pool and discuss their specialized knowledge.
- 2) The group circulated a draft report to the general film community through eleven regional meetings for discussion and expansion. In addition to the regional reviews, a number of individuals offered written suggestions and information based on their own particular experiences.
- 3) The material and information from the committee meetings and the regional meetings was gathered, digested and, with the addition of substantial new research, edited into a composite document.

### **The Mohonk Conference**

The original impetus for this report came from a three-day meeting at the Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York, of some 30 representatives of film centers throughout the United States. (A list of the participating organizations is included in the Appendix.) The meeting, held in February of 1973, was co-sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art Film Department and the Pacific Film Archives of the University Art Museum in Berkeley, California. Most of the participants had not previously met, though they shared similar problems.

The discussion of the various topics on the agenda produced an acknowledgement that the primary shared problem was a lack of generally accepted definitions and, in particular, the lack of national leadership. The leadership vacuum was a particularly sensitive issue as most of the participants were dedicated to regional autonomy, but sensed the danger that an organization without a true national con-

stituency and without a proven interest in the welfare of the regional centers would, by default, assume the position of spokesman.

After a particularly heated discussion concerning the possible certification of regional centers by one national organization, the suggestion was made that a provisional working committee be established to consider the various shared problems and report back to the conference participants. Ten individuals were initially selected to serve on this committee: John Culkin, Director of the Center for Understanding Media; Gerald O'Grady, Director of Media Study, Buffalo; Peter Feinstein, then Director of the University Film Study Center in Cambridge, Ma.; James Blue, then Director of the Rice Media Center in Houston; Sally Dixon, then Curator of the Film Section of the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh; Denise Jacobson, then Director of the Film Program at the Portland Museum of Art; Eileen Bowser, Archivist at the Museum of Modern Art; Sam Kula, then Archivist of the American Film Institute; Sheldon Renan, then Director of the Pacific Film Archives in Berkeley; and Jonas Mekas, Director of the Anthology Film Archives in New York as recording secretary.

### **Initial Hopes**

When the committee of ten began meeting, it held hopes of developing a plan for a central organization to serve the national film and television community. In this spirit, the committee called itself "The Committee on Film and Television Resources and Services," reflecting both the early optimism of the committee members and the broad charge given it by the participants in the Mohonk Conference.

Expectations at the early meetings ran high. All aspects of film and television were open for discussion. As new areas of interest were developed, new members were added to increase the breadth of information represented at the meetings.

The early meetings were devoted to outlining procedures. Various polls were taken, some more successful than others, and a number of draft documents were presented for discussion. Progress was at times slow. All the members of the committee had substantial commitments elsewhere. Funds were not available for the hiring of full-time staff, consultants, research assistants or for the compensation of committee members. All progress was dependent on the energies of the participants.

During a period of two years, a substantial amount of information was gathered and a constituency was defined. However, it became clear that the sweeping charge given the committee at Mohonk was beyond its capacity. The alternative was for the committee to con-

centrate on those areas particularly suited to its resources and of greatest utility and significance to the broadest audience. Towards this end, the committee compiled the information gathered and the studies prepared into a preliminary document. This preliminary report was composed of five chapters, as follows: "Filmmaking" by James Blue, Sally Dixon, Jonas Mekas and Ted Perry; "Preservation" by Eileen Bowser, John Kuiper, Robert Epstein, James Moore and Sam Suratt; "Distribution" by Peter Feinstein and Dan Talbot; "Exhibition" by Denise Jacobson, William Moritz and Sheldon Renan; "Study" by John Culkin, Gerald O'Grady and Ron Sutton. The draft report was prepared for circulation by Seth Feldman and Barbara Humphrys.

Just under 5,000 copies of the draft report were mailed out for comment. They produced a wide variety of responses. A number of the replies offered suggestions; a few provided additional information on a specific area, and many asked that the report be structured so that it would be useful in explaining to "nonfilm" people what independent filmmaking was all about. The preponderance of the response suggested the need for a broad, descriptive report, making a balanced statement for the independent film community. Most of the information and many of the opinions expressed in the correspondence, and in the regional meetings which followed, have been incorporated into the body of this report.

### **The Regional Meetings**

To be sure that the draft had received wide circulation, and that the comments produced represented a broad spectrum of responses, a series of 11 regional meetings was held. The meetings were open to the public, were geographically diverse and were sponsored by organizations which had participated in the original Mohonk meeting whenever possible. (A list of the organizations holding these meetings is included in the Appendix.)

### **The Writing of the Final Report**

In the spring of 1976, the committee selected one of its members, Peter Feinstein, to prepare a final document incorporating the concerns and approaches of the preliminary report with the views expressed in the correspondence and at the regional meetings. It was at this point that the decision was made to focus on independent film. To accomplish this, much of the material in the preliminary report was restructured to include the multiplicity of views of the general independent film community.

During the final editing process the report was expanded to include additional information and supportive documentation. Much effort was expended to consider the views and needs of an extremely diverse constituency. As much as possible, the final editing process sought to be judicious in decisions involving sensitive topics (such as the hierarchy of film styles or the controversy of commercialism versus art) and to be inclusive when more than one view was valid. It was the goal of the editor to present the reader with the full diversity of viewpoints which give the independent film community its vitality, paying particular attention to the inherent freedom of communication which gives independent film its distinctive function in society.

It is unfortunate that many of the strengths of the independent film community are also the sources of its most significant problems. Unlike the theatrical film industry, which is divided by the competition inherent in the free market but is united by the common goal of profit, independent film lacks any such essential coherence. Some filmmakers consciously avoid competition and many, if not most, of the organizations supporting independent film are, by definition, nonprofit. Because of this multiformity, one tends to refer to independent film as a community rather than as an industry.

The selection of a single editor greatly accelerated the writing process. However, the reader should realize that this report bears the stamp of his efforts. Many decisions were made independently by the editor for the sake of expediency, some of which might not have had the full approval of each and every member of the committee. Though a constant effort was made to be even handed, it remains impossible to present the view of every conceivable minority, or to present information as it is viewed by every individual in so divergent a community as independent film. An early decision made by the editor was to present the information in as lucid and simple a manner as possible. Terms which have broad circulation among filmmakers are defined for the lay readers. Hairs which could be split *ad infinitum* were avoided. In all cases, inclusive definitions were used instead of exclusive, and optimism was given more credence than gloom. The desire to be definitive was tempered by pragmatism and the realization that the isolation of common ground was far more important than advancing any single, idiomatic, view of film.

In the preparation of the final document as much information as was available from other sources was compiled and evaluated. Unfortunately, very little previous substantial research had been done on independent film. Though several studies had been made at one time

or another, they lacked substantiating information. In general, studies have relied either on interviews or on the conclusions drawn by a single individual. The former tend to get bogged down in the inherent multiplicity of viewpoints; the latter tend to be limited to just one of the views. Little careful consideration had been given to understanding the diversity of independent film which gives it its character.

A final caution offered to the reader is the admission that areas of film neglected in this document—often for simple, pragmatic reasons—or areas given less attention than the reader may have wished have not been passed over because they are in any way considered inferior or of less interest. Such limitations grew out of the desire to devote as much of the available energy as possible to the area of greatest need. In selecting “a” problem, we do not therefore consider it “the” problem.

### **Video and Television**

The electronic medium is, if anything, more complex and its practitioners more contentious than the independent film community. It ranges from the monolithic commercial networks, with their extensive control of entertainment and information, to explorative artistic forays far less defined and structured than the most abstract film. It is a medium with the potential for substantial technological development. It is a part of the same technology that has reduced the computer from room to pocket size, and holds the promise, and threat, of instant worldwide communication.

It was the intention of the committee to include a chapter on video in this report. Recognizing the significance of the medium, several individuals from the television and video communities were added to the committee. Various attempts were made at drafting a chapter. None proved sufficiently satisfactory to be included.

Video posed questions totally apart from the problems of independent film. It proved impossible to define areas of overlap with acceptable precision, and the growth of video is so rapid that boundaries and definitions become blurred almost before they are recognized. However, some overlap is inevitable. The term “television” is used in this report to refer to that aspect of the medium represented by the broadcast of programming, primarily as home entertainment but including other less obvious uses in fields such as education. It is defined as a means of exhibition which can be used to display work from other mediums, particularly film.

The term “video” is used to refer to the electronic technology of recording moving images, playing them back and broadcasting them either live or prerecorded. Video is therefore a broad definition that

would include television, but would also include the artistic and creative uses of electronic image recording. By defining television by its function and video by its technology, we can delineate the common areas with film. Since the function of television is primarily a means of exhibition, there is obvious logic to giving consideration to television in a report on film. But the above definition of video, as a technology parallel to the technology of film, limits its application in this report.

The term "moving image mediums" is used to refer to film and video as a unit when they operate in conjunction. The plural form "mediums" is used in preference to the popularized form "media" because the latter has come to refer primarily to print and television journalism in colloquial usage.

Obviously, these definitions are strained by their formality and a variety of arguments could be made that the technology of video will have a profound influence on the future of film. However, it is equally obvious that any consideration of video as an appendage to an extensive consideration of film would surely misinterpret the current relationship.

Therefore, the committee decided to restrict this report to the independent film community, to refer to television, or video, only in those aspects which are particularly relevant to film and to avoid any unsupported speculation as to the ultimate effect electronic image recording will have on the moving image mediums. The independent aspects of video and television are deserving of far more extensive and specialized attention than they would receive when combined, and perhaps confused, with a study of independent film.

### Sources

Two sources have been used throughout this report: The H.W. Land Corporation conducted extensive interviews with individuals involved in various aspects of independent film for the John and Mary Markle Foundation in 1972 and 1973. The final Land document is composed of six volumes of collected material and is available in the Markle Foundation Library. In the following text this document is referred to simply as the Land Report.

The *Hope Reports* are statistical analyses of the audio-visual marketplace published by Thomas Hope of Rochester, New York. It is difficult to determine the sources of much of Hope's material, due primarily to the competitiveness of the many small companies involved in the audio-visual business. However, it is the sole source of much of the information it comprises. In the following text, it is referred to as the *Hope Reports*, followed by an identifying reference to the year of publication.





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## Introduction

Advanced technology, social change, prosperity, and the rise of a national media consciousness in the last quarter century have spawned a diverse community of individuals who work in the moving image mediums (film and television) on almost every level of American business and culture. Film and television are no longer scientific marvels produced by a mystical process.

Children are familiarized with video tape and film from their first entry into the school system. Churches, government agencies, and industry all produce thousands of films and tapes each year. For a few hundred dollars, the hobbyist can purchase sophisticated 8-mm sound equipment which is the technical equal of standard commercial 16-mm equipment used less than a decade ago.

The "film community" in the United States now ranges from the corporate organizations that produce the feature films shown in commercial theaters to the unrecognized, student filmmaker who has an audience of a few friends. Between the two extremes are documentary, industrial, avantgarde, anthropological, narrative, educational filmmakers, and a host of others. The primary and perhaps only commonality is that all use motion picture film to record moving images — a bond no greater (yet no less) than that among those who use printed words on paper as their chosen medium.

Despite this diversity, the public's image of "film" is dominated by what is shown in commercial theaters and seen on commercial television. It is only the more recent generations, for whom the moving image mediums are a part of almost every facet of their lives, who have working knowledge of film in all of its forms. But, for the segment of the population born and educated before the Second World War, the newspaper is the primary source of information, the textbook the primary source of education, and the local movie theater the primary diversion.

Before the War, movies were something shown in large theaters, were usually about two hours long, had a plot, had familiar actors and actresses, and asked very little of the viewer besides credulity and an acceptance of the conceits of the medium. They were mass entertainment and little else. For the educated and cultured of the period, movies were suspect, indiscriminate, and dissolute.

Theatrical film remains dominant in the film community if measured in terms of total revenues or total audience. However, if one considers other standards, such as the number of films produced, the number of individuals employed, and the number of producing organizations across the country as measures of size, the other aspect of film, sometimes collectively referred to as nontheatrical film, is far larger.

In recent years as equipment has become more available, filmmakers have increasingly produced films which they, as individuals, wish to make, much as a writer would write about what interested him or a musician might wish to play his own music. Since they work outside of organized structures, such filmmakers call themselves "independent."

The term "independent" implies that a single individual has primary and unquestioned creative control over the production of a film. To have this control, it is usually necessary for a single individual to conceive the film, to be the primary motivating force in the production of the film, and to control the capital invested in the film. This is true whether the film is a narrative feature, a documentary production, or an avantgarde film.

The idea of singular creative vision is by no means novel, particularly in a medium with artistic pretensions. However, film production historically necessitated large numbers of trained professionals participating on a single project, the amortizing of expensive equipment, and corporate financing. Indeed, the "auteur" theory of film criticism, the concept that a single individual, particularly the director, can be isolated and studied as the primary creative force in a film, is a relatively new, and still debated, approach to film criticism.

Though some of its aspects may lack overt commercialism, independent filmmaking is a part and a product of a free enterprise system. It works in and needs an open market with competition by a wide variety of organizations. It is based on the concept that a multiplicity of views freely expressed is healthy for American society. It does not need audience support or obvious cultural utility to justify its existence. Such measures are more expected in totalitarian states with controlled communications. Independent film, as an aspect of the communications industry that does not need mass audiences to survive, does not have to

pander to the most widely held views of society to ensure adequate financial returns, and does not have to seek approval of or meet the needs of the corporate enterprises necessary to support the mass media. It is a form of free communication among individuals, no matter whether the product is viewed as art, as didactic information or as news.

In essence, independent filmmakers accept reduced profit potential and specialized audiences in exchange for creative freedom. The traditional suppliers of film and television are structured so that they are inherently unable to accept or adapt to this premise.

It is the growth of an independent, self-sufficient film system that has made this populist view of the medium viable. It is now possible to learn the craft of filmmaking, to produce films, and to find distribution and exhibition totally within the independent film community.

Film schools are replacing the studios as the training ground for talent, producing a better educated as well as more individualistic technician. The growth of media in education into a billion-dollar industry has fueled independent production. Hundreds of distributors now specialize in independently made films. New forms of exhibition are on the increase. Museums, colleges, libraries, and community groups now regularly exhibit the work of independent filmmakers.

Along with the expanding interest in film has come the demand for the methodical preservation of the peculiarly American legacy of film in well run, professional archives.

Great diversity exists within the ranks of independent filmmakers. As with any community of individualists, its members focus primarily on differences, preferring to ignore similarities. Its members display a distaste for classification and generalization, and so resist inclusive definitions. However, a few general statements can be made about independent filmmakers and their beliefs.

**1. Independent filmmakers form a nationwide community.** Unlike the commercial feature film industry, independent filmmaking is not limited to a few major cities. Though filmmakers concentrate in large cities, particularly New York, independent filmmakers and independent film activities exist in most every area of the country. In 1976, the 976 applicants to the Independent Filmmaker Program of the American Film Institute represented 43 states.

**2. It is almost impossible to typify the independent filmmaker by style of film.** Independent filmmakers are capable of producing just about any form or genre of film known, from low budget, personal films to technically sophisticated, general audience films. A filmmaker cannot be defined as independent because he or she works in one style

or another. However, certain forms, such as documentary or avant-garde film, may be far more readily classified as independent than as curriculum based films or commercial features.

**3. Commercialism has little to do with the definition of independent film.** Some independent filmmakers make substantial amounts of money, others make very little and work at other jobs to support themselves. However, making independent films is unlikely to make anyone rich, and film remains a relatively expensive medium.

**4. Almost all independent film is in 16 mm.** Most commercial movie theaters show only 35-mm film, the first gauge in general use. (Film gauges are defined by the width of the strip of film.) Besides theatrical film production, relatively little 35-mm film is used in the United States. Sixteen millimeter is by far the primary gauge for nontheatrical professional film production.

**5. Independent filmmakers share a common credo that the capability of making films should be available to a large number of individuals and organizations, not just the ones with substantial capital.**

**6. Independent film places a premium on freedom of choice in all its aspects, in production, in distribution, and in exhibition.** It generally seeks to increase the options presented to a potential viewer.

**7. Independent filmmakers believe the lines of communication between filmmakers and the public in the United States are not open, and that the industries involved do not encourage the growth of new sources of production and exhibition, do not support a multiplicity of television and film outlets or promote the diversity of materials presented.**

**8. A free flow of information is basic to American culture and government.** As the sources of information shift from the printed word to the moving image mediums, great care must be taken to transfer to film and video the freedoms enjoyed by the printed word, as well as the accessibility of the technology of production which makes communication truly free.

**9. As the population increases its reliance on the moving image medium for information, a public policy must be adopted ensuring that general access to the means of communication is maintained and is not controlled by large corporate bodies, and that the iconoclast and the critic may exist without undue financial obstacles.**

**10. Entry into the communications marketplace should not be controlled by a limited number of similar organizations.** The market should encourage new approaches and a diversity of sources.

It is the view of this report that the place and function of the independent film producer (and, increasingly, the independent video producer)

must be given substantial consideration when broad questions involving film and television are under examination. Organizations, be they profit or nonprofit, government or private, should beware making decisions that would inhibit the continuation of the broad-based production of film and television in the United States. As our citizenry continues to increase its dependence on the moving image medium, support must be given to the potential voices of minority opinions — the independent media producer.

It is the object of the remainder of this report to describe the independent film community and its primary concerns.



## The Filmmaker

The glamour of Hollywood and its legendary fortunes still dominate the public image of film. But with the decline of the studio system after the Second World War, the growth of television, the development of a substantial audio-visual marketplace, and the increased general interest in film culture, a few cracks have appeared in the monolithic system that once controlled the making, exhibition, and distribution of films. Into these openings have moved a wide variety of individuals who form the continually evolving independent film community.

Following the Second World War there were four specific developments that provided the stimulus for the growth of an active film community outside of the traditional film producing industry.

1. The wide use of the media in the general education process.
2. The proliferation of inexpensive, lightweight filmmaking equipment.
3. The growth of independent forms of film exhibition.
4. The development of a coherent avantgarde film movement.

### 1. Film in Education

During the mid 1950s, concern for the standards of American education was growing among educators and the general public. It is not difficult to recall the widespread fear in the United States that the educational system of the Soviet Union was so superior to the American system that we would not be able to retain world leadership because the Russians would be "smarter" than the Americans.

In 1958, Congress passed the first National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The NDEA legislation opens with the following statement: "The Congress finds and declares that the security of the Nation requires

the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of young men and women." Under this act, substantial funding became available to local schools to purchase film and other audio-visual material. Until 1974 this funding continued under either NDEA Title III or, in the Johnson Administration, as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

During this period of growth in the audio-visual marketplace at the elementary and secondary school levels, an increasing number of universities began to offer film production and studies courses. Though several major programs do predate this period, the 1960s was undeniably a time in which the teaching of filmmaking (as well as the study of film) grew, albeit fitfully.

## 2. The Proliferation of Inexpensive, Lightweight Film Equipment

Though 16-mm safety film was first developed in 1923 for amateur filmmaking, it was not until the end of the Second World War that it attracted professional filmmakers. Television also accepted 16-mm as its standard film gauge, and today almost all nontheatrical films are made in 16 mm.

However, it is not the stock itself that was crucial to the development of independent film, but the relatively low cost, high quality, lightweight equipment that was developed to handle the film. This equipment has enabled the average individual to have access to reasonably sophisticated filmmaking equipment in a gauge that produces a commercially viable product.

## 3. Independent Exhibition

Film societies and independent exhibitors, often called "art" theaters, began a decade of substantial growth in the postwar period. Dan Talbot, who owned the New Yorker Theater, estimates that there were over 600 art theaters operating in the United States in 1962. During this same period film societies began to proliferate on college campuses to the point that today it is the rare campus that does not have at least one major film exhibition program. Some large universities may have a half dozen or more such programs in simultaneous operation.

The factor uniting both the art houses and the campus-based programs is that the film programmer, the individual who selects the films shown, makes choices based on personal taste. Films for commercial theaters are usually booked sight unseen. The taste of the film programmers was fed by the large numbers of foreign films readily available for American exhibition, but which were ignored by the major commercial theater operators.



Over the past decade the number of art houses has declined as the major distributors began acquiring foreign films and presenting them in first-run theaters. Many of the art theaters have been replaced by the proliferation of exhibition programs at colleges, in museums, at libraries and by a growing number of a new type of independent exhibition, such as the Film Forum in New York City; Upstate Films in Rhinebeck, New York; the Oasis in Los Angeles; the Canyon Cinematheque in San Francisco; and the NAME Gallery in Chicago.

#### 4. A Coherent Avantgarde Film Movement

Immediately following the Second World War a number of filmmakers, generally though not accurately referred to as avantgarde, began to make use of 16-mm equipment for creative expression. Early members of this community include Maya Deren, Sidney Peterson, Kenneth Anger, James Broughton, John Whitney, Marie Menken and Willard Maas, and many others. Though this community has grown substantially over the intervening years, it remains one of the more esoteric elements of film. However, these individuals did establish a significant precedent: that any individual wishing to do so could make films. They removed filmmaking from the mysteries of the studio with its complicated equipment and armies of technicians. Utilizing simple war surplus equipment, small groups of talented individuals were able to produce inexpensive films of sufficient quality to attract a paying audience.

In the early 1960s, organizations such as the Film Makers' Cooperative in New York City sought innovative means of distributing these films and foundations began to give financial support to avantgarde filmmakers.

#### **The Independent Filmmaker**

The primary characteristic of the independent filmmaker is his or her interest in retaining creative control over production. The retention of the right to determine how a film is made is not a simple matter. Traditionally, the large number of people involved in the making of narrative, feature-length films and the substantial amounts of money involved in production and distribution, create a situation in which it is often not clear to the casual observer just who has the "right of final cut." Such rights are usually written into contracts, but it is rare that the primary creative contributor to a film will receive such a guarantee. Such guarantees are reserved for those with exceptional strengths at the bargaining table. Final creative control is normally retained by financial

backers and by distributors, and may not rest with a specific individual. Investors are very careful about who has control over their money.

In the case of the sponsored film, the amount of creative control the filmmaker has is determined by his or her relationship with the client, who will, in the end, have complete control over the final form and use of the film. Sponsoring organizations can vary substantially, from public spirited groups that are interested in films of sensitivity and quality, to organizations wishing only the simplest and most functional film for their purpose.

If we use creative independence as the primary measure of definition, we can draw a generalized description to complete the image of the independent filmmaker: To maintain independence, the filmmaker often works under less than prime conditions with small production budgets and less than exciting returns on investment, no matter how small that initial investment may be. The filmmaker must often accept great personal financial risk, since distribution arrangements are rarely made before a film is completed. Independent distributors and nontheatrical distributors do not normally give completion funds or any guarantee of distribution and, as a result, if the film eventually does not go into general distribution, the individual filmmaker will absorb the total loss. Self-distribution is a common alternative, but it further increases the filmmaker's risk.

### **The Divisions of Independent Film**

For the purpose of clarity, film can be divided into three general areas based on content: documentary film, avantgarde film, and narrative film. Each grouping has its limitations and exceptions, but they provide the structure necessary to understand the interrelationship of various aspects of the medium. (A possible fourth group is independent animators who appear to be growing in number. However, to reduce ambiguity, we will make the assumption that animators are working within the three primary categories.)

Documentary films record a real-life event or seek to explicate a real-life event.

Since the late 1960s most significant documentary film has been independently produced. Though commercial television does produce film that is documentary in nature, TV film functions primarily as news programming and is, therefore, confined by the conventions of that fairly stylized medium. It is for this reason that we look to the independents for innovation.

In recent years, it has become stylish to abandon the term "docu-

mentary film.” “Nonfiction film” has at times been adopted as a more descriptive and broader term. The implication is that nonfiction film includes all forms of the medium which depict or inform or are renditions of real-life events.

Avantgarde films specifically make a personal statement with the primary interest being the aesthetic content of the film. The term “avantgarde” is ambiguous, particularly when used in relation to filmmaking. It should be understood that it does not imply that the avantgarde filmmaker is in advance of anything or is in any sense an “experimental” aspect of the medium. The term is used to connote a mode of creative expression that cannot be defined in terms of traditional art because it goes outside of the parameters of the more traditional styles. We use the term because it most adequately describes the type of film under discussion. Other terms used for this style of filmmaking include “experimental,” “personal,” “underground” and “abstract.” As none of these are any more satisfactory than “avantgarde,” we are using the one term throughout the report for the sake of consistency.

Though the avantgarde filmmaker is often thought of as an experimentalist, it is rare for such “experimental” techniques to find their way into popular, narrative films. In reality, the avantgarde filmmaker is more closely related to the person who works in plastic art forms, such as painting and sculpture, than to the filmmaker in the commercial world of the cinema.

This relationship does not establish avantgarde filmmaking as any more of an art form than the other areas of filmmaking, though its practitioners are as likely to have backgrounds in painting and sculpture as in film.

More than any of the individuals who work in other aspects of film, the avantgarde filmmaker tends to work alone. Credits are usually the name of the artist preceded by the phrase “a Film By ....”

Narrative films tell a fictional story. The independent filmmaker producing narrative films presents a study in contradictions. The individual we are discussing is not the independent producer who has become so much a part of the commercial film industry. Rather, he is the filmmaker who is willing to stake his or her entire personal assets, plus the assets of any friend or relative who wishes to participate, on a feature-length narrative film. The definitive factor is the same as with the other areas of filmmaking — the filmmaker retains control of all aspects of the creative process.

Most every student in film school dreams of making mass-audience, feature films. Most will eventually accept far less in terms of profes-

sional achievement. Many of these individuals have false notions of what the film industry is. The contrast between the possible and the norm is extreme. While feature-length narrative films can earn millions, there is almost no market for independent narrative films outside of commercial, theatrical release . . . and very few independent films get that release.

Each of these three divisions of independent film can be further subdivided into either theatrical film (films made to suit the requirements for exhibition in commercial theaters) or nontheatrical film (films made for showing at any of the remaining environments in which film is viewed). However, in practice, very little documentary or avantgarde film is shown in movie theaters.

The three primary divisions have parallels with the medium of print: avantgarde film is to poetry, as documentary film is to journalism, as narrative filmmaking is to the novel or short story. Aspects of these divisions aspire to art and aspects of each are commercialized and meant for an indiscriminating mass market. Just as poetry can be a particularly personal and creative art, it can also be of the greeting card variety; just as journalism can be dry and dull, it can, in the hands of a master such as H. L. Mencken or Norman Mailer, be elevated to an art form; and the novel as a form accommodates both the pop fiction of the best seller and some of the great achievements of human creativity.

### **The Development of the Independent Documentary Film**

The most significant technical advances in the history of the documentary film occurred in the early 1960s with the development of lightweight film and sound equipment. These cameras and tape recorders permitted small groups of individuals, or even persons working alone, to produce films of high technical quality. The equipment also permitted film crews to record events as they were happening and to follow these events as they progressed. Filmmakers were able to develop a heightened sense of reality and participation, and were willing to sacrifice such niceties as the steadiness gained by the use of a tripod to become actively involved in the action being filmed. This style of filmmaking, sometimes called "cinema vérité," or "direct cinema" found ready application to the sweeping social movements of the period.

A significant aspect of this growth in the 1960s was the organization of groups of concerned filmmakers who, holding a strong belief that the medium had the potential to change public opinion, were willing to forego personal profit to participate in the various "movements" of the period. Some of the films which resulted were made by committed

professionals, while others were made by rank beginners with fantastic commitment to a cause.

These documentary filmmakers worked in a climate which called for extreme personal sacrifice and devotion to the efficacy of social change. Films were made on budgets that were laughable by industry standards; while the standard rate for commercial production was over \$1000 per minute, they were making thirty-minute documentary films for under \$500.

The filmmakers' burdens did not end with the completion of the film. There were no means of distribution and exhibition for films on such controversial topics as American foreign policy, repression of free speech in the United States, and heroes of the counterculture such as Angela Davis and Fred Hampton. So filmmakers formed cooperative groups, such as the Newsreel Collective and American Documentary Film, to share showings for their films. Filmmakers would often accompany films to provide eyewitness accounts of the events recorded. Film rental fees were loose, determined by the circumstance of each screening.

To understand the commitment of these filmmakers it is not enough to recognize just the financial hardships. Though their causes are now generally accepted as significant milestones of our society, the filmmakers themselves were often in great physical peril while performing their work, were often subjected to harassment by government and quasi-government agencies, and, with the memory of the film industry blacklists of the 1950s still fresh in their minds, were aware that they were possibly forfeiting their ability to earn a livelihood in the future.

### **The Growth of Avantgarde Film**

The work of artists such as Maya Deren, and the previously mentioned John Whitney, in the mid 1940s is often used as the starting point of a coherent American avantgarde film movement. This burst of activity can be accredited to functions of postwar America: the increasing media consciousness of the United States; the surplus materials available at the end of the war, and the focus on abstract expressionism in painting, with its capital in New York.

One of the earliest regular programs of independent film screenings was Amos Vogel's Cinema 16. Founded in 1947, the program ran for over 16 years showing the work of both American independent filmmakers and emerging foreign feature film directors such as Truffaut, Bresson and Antonioni. The program was run on a membership basis with over 7,000 members at its peak. Cinema 16 also had a distribution arm marketing the best of the films shown in the screening program.

The growth of avantgarde film accelerated in the 1960s and was very much a part of the turbulent art scene of that decade. Andy Warhol brought a great deal of attention to his well publicized films. His films, as well as the work of others, received coverage in the national press, though Warhol eventually stopped producing avantgarde films in favor of mass market features.

It was also during the 1960s that various distribution companies attempted to market the most commercial avantgarde films in a variety of packages, such as Janus Films' New Cinema collection and Universal's Kinetic Art series. However, audiences for avantgarde film have traditionally been small groups, loyal but limited in size. Attempts at marketing heavily promoted, prepackaged series were for the most part short-lived.

A mainstay of the exhibition of avantgarde film is the "one man show" in which filmmakers present a program of their films and discuss their work with the audience. Avantgarde filmmakers frequently go on tours, travelling from show to show for fees varying from a few dollars to, in a very few instances, over \$1,000.

An identifiable, national avantgarde film community exists in the United States. It is loosely structured by the various institutions which serve it, such as the film cooperatives, the many universities which employ avantgarde filmmakers in art or film programs, and museums which have become increasingly involved with filmmaking as an art form.

A dominant feature of this avantgarde film community is the poverty of its artists. Very few are able to make livings from their work. Perhaps fewer than a dozen are able to maintain reasonable levels of income from their films. An annual income of \$10,000 from total film rentals and sales is considered to be a substantial return.

A survey of independent filmmakers conducted by Sheldon Renan in 1973 for the National Endowment for the Arts indicated that the average income from film for an individual avantgarde filmmaker in that year was \$845, which includes all film rentals, grants, institutional support, and other income available. The survey indicates that 89% of the filmmakers did not recoup production costs from film income, and 96% of the respondents indicated that they could not support themselves on the income generated by their films.<sup>1</sup>

Though all artists starve and filmmakers are probably no worse off than the average painter, filmmakers have no avenue to the financial

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<sup>1</sup>The Economics of Independent Filmmaking. A report prepared for the Public Media Program of the National Endowment for the Arts by Sheldon Renan. February 23, 1973.

success that can come to well established artists. The prominent painter or sculptor is regarded as a national treasure and is rewarded with a substantial income. The estate of Picasso was worth hundreds of millions of dollars, and Mark Rothko's estate is valued in the tens of millions of dollars; but an exceptionally successful avantgarde filmmaker can expect to earn no more than perhaps \$20,000 a year during a few peak years, and most of that will come from teaching or personal appearances.

In the past few years, however, indications of a stabilizing avantgarde film market and a slow but continuing growth of this market may hold the promise of a more equitable situation in which the film artist can live on income produced directly by his or her work.

During one month in 1972, three major showcases of avantgarde film opened in New York: The Whitney Museum of Art New American Filmmakers Series, the Anthology Film Archives, and the Film Forum. Because of their ability to attract coverage in the New York press, these programs have brought increased attention to avantgarde films. Two of these programs are regularly reviewed in the *New York Times*, and the third provides a showcase for major works.

The number of showcases for avantgarde films has continued to grow each year. An ever increasing number of museum programs and universities are including avantgarde film; and, of particular interest, each year seems to bring additional showcases primarily devoted to avantgarde film.

One of the continuing problems faced by the growing interest in avantgarde film is that reviewers often assigned to write about avantgarde film have neither sufficient knowledge nor interest in the art form. It is not uncommon to read a review of a Whitney Museum or Film Forum program in the *New York Times* by a critic who is obviously uncomfortable with a non-narrative format and is pained to do more than describe what he has seen and wonder what anyone else might see in it. It is understandable that a film critic who has been trained to give his opinion of narrative, feature films would be out of his territory when viewing films which lack stories, actors, and narrative form. Unfortunately, traditional art critics experience severe difficulties with the time and space limitations of film and few publications print anything more than the most superficial writings on avantgarde film.

Avantgarde film has never had a mass audience and one assumes that it never will. Yet neither do most other art forms. All are supported by a loyal following. Unfortunately, film does not produce a saleable commodity or byproduct, as does painting, which can be bought and sold by collectors. A few attempts have been made to limit the number of prints struck of a specific film, but the combination of factors

necessary to produce a collectable, original work of art has never resulted.

It is interesting that the free economic system which makes avant-garde film possible (avantgarde filmmaking as it is known in the United States is almost totally unknown in socialist or communist economies) also makes it all but impossible for the avantgarde filmmaker to earn a living from his or her work, as a capitalist economy demands that art have a market value. Market value is customarily determined by the scarcity inherent in the production of nonreproduceable works of art by a single person. Film, on the other hand, is inherently reproduceable and, perhaps even more distressing, deteriorates with use.

### Independent Narrative Film

The period of the greatest optimism for the potential of independent feature film production was during the late 1950s when the art theaters were at their peak. These theaters, generally owned and operated by an individual who chose the films shown, were far more open to presenting films by an unknown filmmaker than were commercial theaters, which usually book films sight unseen. The growth of these small theaters led filmmakers to hope that they could produce low-budget features of high quality and get a reasonable return from the 600 or so art theaters. The concept followed the lead of the "off-Broadway" theater which, at that time, was a low budget alternative to Broadway productions.

Unfortunately, the art theaters were sustained primarily by foreign films, and when the best of these films began to appear in first-run theaters the numbers of art houses declined. The film societies and museum programs, which were at the same time increasing in number, did not provide a significant avenue of exhibition for low-budget features. These developing forms of exhibition were primarily oriented toward classic films, documentaries, and avantgarde film, or recently released feature films.

Few avenues of distribution and exhibition have remained open to the independent narrative filmmaker. A few examples of an independent such as *Hester Street* breaking into major national exhibition do exist, but most low-budget attempts by independent producers are relegated to midnight screenings in the few theaters that cultivate a more adventurous clientele. One observer described the successful independent feature such as *Hester Street* as similar to the die in the glass case in the Las Vegas casino that were used for 27 consecutive winning rolls. Both are examples of the possible, not the probable.

Of all the independent filmmakers, the feature filmmaker has trad-



itionally received the least support from granting institutions. However, if the narrative feature filmmaker survives the fantastic odds against him, the financial rewards can be substantial. He or she is the least likely to be seeking support from a charitable organization.

Unfortunately, there are no alternatives. There are no regional or "stock" companies as there are dramatic theater companies, in which an aspiring filmmaker can work, making low-budget films, until he is ready for the big time. Nor are there nonprofit, feature film production companies. And, unlike the situation in documentary films or the live entertainment industry, there is no method for a narrative filmmaker to work on a small scale, accepting limited rewards and a moderate income, while developing creative skills. The low-budget feature produced by the independent filmmaker must compete directly with recent products of the industry giants for space on commercial movie theater screens.

The American Film Institute is one national organization that expresses concern and provides services for aspiring narrative filmmakers: its grant program has always been open to dramatic film ideas; it has a program providing internships to aspiring filmmakers with an especially admired director; its Center for Advanced Film Study offers a two-year professional level course to a selected group of filmmakers; and, a recently instituted program, the Directing Workshop for Women, provides training for women, already working in an area of film, who wish to become directors. Most of these programs have achieved a reasonable degree of success, yet none of them can claim to having produced a major film director.

### **Profiles of Independent Filmmakers**

The following profiles will give the reader an idea of the variety of individuals who make up the independent film community.<sup>2</sup>

#### Jordan Belson

Jordan Belson is one of the pioneers among the avantgarde filmmakers. Beginning in 1947, his career has continued through to the present in a series of productive phases.

His first films were self-financed. *Mambo*, *Caravan* and *Mandala* earned him a place in the creative film world. He explains that the

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<sup>2</sup>The profiles of independent filmmakers are excerpted from material collected for the Land Report. The research was conducted in 1973 and 1974.

market was much smaller in the early days than today, with occasional exhibits of experimental films at museums, at the Art in Cinema Series, in film societies and showings to friends of the filmmakers. Through Cinema 16 Belson was eventually able to get exposure through screenings in New York theaters.

The early 1960s were a productive period for Belson when he made such films as *Allures* (1961), followed by *Illusions*, *Re-Entry*, *Phenomena*, and others. Belson was trained as a traditional artist. He sees experimental film as a painter would, as a combination of painting and the moving image. His early films were distinctive for their painter's consciousness.

Belson's films have creative continuity unbroken through all phases of the filmmaking process. Though his films make extensive use of sophisticated visual effects, he depends on no outside technicians, retaining total creative control.

Belson was on the verge of ending his filmmaking career when in 1964 he was awarded several foundation grants. At that time he also found a distributor, Janus Films, and began to draw income as part of its New Cinema package. Pyramid Films has since become his basic distributor and has provided him with enough income to continue filmmaking.

Currently, the annual living he earns from his films averages between \$4,000 and \$5,000. As a bachelor who lives quite frugally, he manages to get along on that income. Belson believes his function is to produce films, and does not want to be involved with distribution.

### Julia Reichert

Julia Reichert, born in Bordentown, N.J., in 1946, uses film as a means of activating the political consciousness of the viewer. She has focused on women as one of the most oppressed groups within the society and as a group who would have a great stake in change.

Reichert works with her partner, Jim Klein. Together they made *Growing Up Female*, a fifty-one-minute documentary produced for \$2,400 in 1971. The entire production cost was born by the two partners. Centering on the growing process of six women, the film shows how women are socialized by detailing the forces that operate when they are at school, that push them into marriage, and affect their whole lives. The film was very successful in reaching many women, causing them to discuss their own lives and their relationship to men. It sells for \$400 per print and has been averaging about one hundred sales and three

hundred rentals per year. However, the film is available at reduced rates to organizations with limited finances.

Reichert and Klein decided to distribute the film through the cooperative, New Day Films, of which Reichert is a founding member. The members of New Day share promotional costs, such as the mailing and printing of a catalog, but the members are responsible for promoting their own films. The actual booking and shipping of prints is handled by a booking agent.

Reichert worked as a waitress to raise money to make the first print of the film. She then made a tour of the East Coast, contacting women's groups in each city and showing the film. After each showing, she would take a collection which gave her enough money to live and move to the next stop.

With funds raised from the road tour, Reichert and Klein bought some mailing lists, printed their own brochure, and mailed out ten thousand pieces describing the film. Klein and Reichert were invited to show the film at the influential Flaherty Film Seminar where it was well received. After that, rentals and sales increased dramatically.

The film has been used by a wide range of groups including housewives, journalists, choral groups, secretaries, and the American Psychological Association. It has been used in women's prisons and a state reformatory, has been presented as a special on the Public Broadcasting System, and was featured in a women's film festival.

In 1974, Reichert and Klein completed *Methadone: An American Way of Dealing*, a film which criticizes methadone maintenance. It runs sixty minutes, is in black and white, and cost about \$20,000 to produce, not including salaries. It was well received at the Flaherty Film Seminar and at the Seminar for Public Broadcasting, and was screened at the Whitney Museum of American Art New American Filmmakers Series.

Distribution of this film presented a special problem; it was necessary to develop a sense of who the audience was, who ought to see it. A major factor was that many government drug treatment programs are based on methadone and as the film takes an anti-methadone stance, many government agencies did not want to show it. However, Reichert was able to develop a list of groups of government drug treatment workers who were interested in the film and has received support from other drug education organizations as well. Other audiences for the film include social workers, community health workers, college groups, and people who teach third-world studies.

In the three years that this film has been distributed there have been

about 250 rentals and 45 sales. It costs \$50 to rent, \$400 to buy, but the charges are lowered if the prospective renter has insufficient funds. The filmmakers have not earned their investment back.

Reichert and Klein, with Miles Mogulescu, completed a new film titled *Union Maids* in May of 1976. It is based on interviews with women who were in the labor movement during the 1930s and was made on a \$15,000 budget: \$4,000 in grants and \$11,000 in loans.

*Union Maids* has received a substantial amount of early attention through a benefit screening in a New York theater which was reviewed in the major New York newspapers. As a result, the film has been shown in small theaters, though the theatrical engagements have not returned any income to the filmmakers. However, the early publicity has resulted in over 40 print sales and 400 rentals in less than a year of active distribution. The filmmakers expect to break even by Christmas of 1977.

Part of the success achieved by Reichert and Klein can be attributed to their participation in New Day Films, along with their devotion of much energy to the production and the distribution of their films. Through self distribution, they are averaging a return of approximately 40% of total receipts after deduction of the costs of distribution.

### Hollis Frampton

Hollis Frampton, born in Wooster, Ohio in 1936, is one of the best known avantgarde filmmakers today. In secondary school — Phillips Academy in Andover, Ma. — he studied art with Patrick Morgan, and was introduced to Hellenic, French, and modern English literature by poet and translator, Dudley Fitts. During this period he became friendly with three classmates who were later to distinguish themselves in the arts: painter Frank Stella, sculptor Carl Andre, and composer Frederisk Rzewski.

At Western Reserve University, Frampton concentrated on Greek and Latin, took courses in writing and modern literature, and developed a correspondence with Ezra Pound. He left college after three years and moved to Washington, D.C., where he visited Pound almost every day.

In the late 1950s, Frampton moved to New York and supported himself by working as an electrical contractor. In 1961, he took up full-time employment as a laboratory technician, alternating between still and cinema laboratories. In the mid 1960s he had a succession of still photography shows.

Early in 1969, Frampton joined the faculty of the Department of Art at Hunter College and found another vocation in teaching. Later, he

taught the history and theory of film at the School of Visual Arts and at Cooper Union. He is currently at the Center for Media Study, SUNY at Buffalo, New York, as an associate professor.

Frampton believes that many of his early years were spent in the search for an artistic vocation. He was always interested in film, but accepted “the myth that in order to partake of the industry, one had to have a million dollars and a film crew.”

It gradually dawned on him that filmmaking was something a single person could do. He dates this realization from his exposure to the films of Cinema 16 and to foreign films made by Jean Cocteau and other European filmmakers whose works were individual endeavors rather than group projects.

My own development was slow. I was trained in languages and literature; I studied writing and art. But I was 30 before I had my hands on a movie camera. I needed to set aside the model of the narrative feature. There were still things you could do with movies. You could do modest work — a sonnet, not an epic poem. Because I was looking for a vocation in art, I was encouraged. I would get the resources to make short films. Being able to do it was a decisive experience for me. It has a kind of relationship to creative activity that would absorb my entire range of interests — in language, literature, and art. There was a kind of eclecticism to it. I could relate to its world and continue to use all the skills I had learned.

Frampton observes that he did his early filmmaking with no thought of distribution.

We were trying to make a critical examination of things. We were happy to have no pressure and were under no illusions. We saw the catastrophe that had befallen Orson Welles in several of his motion picture projects. We had no one to please except our own notion of what was good and strong to make.

Four of Frampton's early films, made between 1962 and 1965, have been destroyed or lost. “I had no choice,” says Frampton. “I had to choose between making more films or preserving my old ones. I spliced the original footage together and projected it until it wore out.” His work has been supported by grants from the Friends of the New Cinema, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the American Film Institute.

What is Frampton trying to communicate in his films? “I believe in the broad social value of candid human records,” he stated.

Experience is mental. It's thought and feeling acted upon and rationalized. I've had my own experience of the things others have done. It's helped to clarify my own life. My experience — my view — came about this way. On the other hand, you try to account

for your work in terms others can understand. I think I'm interested in sharing and would like to share. I owe my survival to others sharing their experiences. We work to serve our needs, to give some coherent view of the world. So, if we have needs in common, our work will be of value to others. Learning can be helpful. It can illuminate our condition. The arts are supremely sociable activities.

Frampton's *Zorn's Lemma*, one of his best-known films and first full-length (60 minutes) avantgarde feature to be included in the New York Film Festival (1970), cost him \$2,500 to produce. It is in color, and has 20 minutes of sound. It took him five years to produce.

His films rent through the New York Film Makers' Coop and there has been no interest among commercial distributors in acquiring them. In 1975, while Frampton spent between \$12,000 and \$14,000 to make films, his films earned \$4,000 in rentals and \$6,000 in sales. In addition to teaching income, Frampton earns about \$4,000 a year on the lecture circuit.

Is the audience for independent film growing or diminishing? Frampton points to the Millenium Film Workshop located in New York City as an example of the growth of audiences for his kind of film. In the ten years that his films have been exhibited there, audiences have steadily grown in size. At the first screening there were 15 people. At one recent screening, there were two shows on the weekend, and each was attended by 200 people.

Frampton's view is that "the filmmaking situation is stabilizing." He feels that the new people in it are more serious and mature.

You no longer see the 19-year-olds with one or two films under their arms. You see the 25-year-old filmmaker with six or seven films. It's the same situation you would expect to find elsewhere in the arts. It's encouraging. It shows film is not a fad. The climate has changed. It's a committed audience like that for poetry or painting.

Frampton is currently working on a 36-hour film cycle, which he hopes to finish in the next five to ten years.

### Allan Beattie

Alan Beattie is a 27-year-old filmmaker who is well on his way to directing his first feature film, but has not yet managed the final breakthrough.

Beattie's earliest filmmaking experience was as a high school student at Phillips Exeter Academy, where he took a basic 8-mm production course and worked with some teachers on a 16-mm film. In college, he took a number of film courses at the University of North Carolina while

he was actually attending Duke University, which did not offer any film courses.

After graduating from Duke, Beattie was interested in spending some time abroad, so he enrolled in the Central Academy of Film Art and Drama in London, a small school staffed by active film professionals. Unfortunately, the school offered limited production facilities and Beattie returned to the United States after a semester. At that time the Orson Welles Theater in Cambridge, Ma., had begun to offer film production courses. Lured by the Welles' recent acquisition of over \$100,000 in production equipment, Beattie paid his tuition (\$500 the first semester, \$750 the second), and gained ready access to cameras, editing machines, sound equipment, and screening facilities, worth far more than ten times the tuition fee.

In 1972, during his second semester in the program, Beattie completed a short film based on the Ambrose Bierce short story, the *Boarded Window*. The film was made on a total budget of \$4,000, including \$1,250 for Beattie's tuition, \$1,500 for film stock and transportation, and \$300 for the rental of the trained lion. *Boarded Window* won notice at a number of film festivals and was nominated for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Student Film Awards.

Perspective Films, a division of Coronet, accepted *Boarded Window* for distribution with a \$2,500 advance against royalties on a contract which paid Beattie 20% of the film's gross earnings. Released in 1974, the film has sold over 200 prints at \$265 each, returning about \$12,000 to the filmmaker. Beattie expects that within six years he will earn between \$25,000 and \$30,000 on the film. He also estimates that if he had made the film under normal circumstances on a full budget, paying his actors and crew, and renting equipment, the film would have cost about \$40,000.

After completion of *Boarded Window*, Beattie was accepted at the American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Study in Beverly Hills. While a fellow at the Center, Beattie completed his second film, *Double Talk*. The nine-minute film portrays a boy picking up a date at her parents' home, revealing both the actual conversations and the private thoughts. The film was made on a budget of \$5,000 (mostly for editing equipment and film stock). Once again, it was not necessary to pay either the crew or the cast, or to rent production equipment.

Not only did *Double Talk* receive a nomination for an Academy Award in 1976 and open the New York Film Festival, but also it received favorable notice at a number of other film festivals. The film began distribution in September 1976 with Learning Corporation of America. Beattie has a contract under which he received a \$2,000 advance against 20% of gross income on a sliding scale whereby the filmmaker's

percentage increases after 300 prints are sold. In the eight months since the distribution began, the film has sold 48 prints — good activity during the first year of distribution when sales are normally slow.

Beattie left the AFI program at the end of his first year and began the process of making his way as a director of feature films. He has found an agent and has developed a number of properties for commercial production. His time has been devoted to developing story ideas and making presentations to producers. He has earned small sums of money for options on his ideas and for development fees. Beattie has been successful at keeping a variety of projects alive throughout the year, but has not been able to bring any single undertaking to fruition. Beattie has been fortunate so far to earn some income from the films he has finished and to have them noticed. However, such successes, as much as they may be the dream of untold numbers of aspiring filmmakers, do not guarantee a chance to direct a feature film.

### Fred Wiseman

Born in 1930, Fred Wiseman is a graduate of Yale Law School. Before making films he was at various times a Lecturer of Law at Yale, and a consultant to government agencies through OSTI, Inc., a Boston based consulting firm. He made his first film, *Titticut Follies*, in 1967. It was financed on credit from the film processing lab. When the film was completed, it was involved in litigation revolving around the invasion of privacy and censorship. If the film had not earned any money, Wiseman would have been personally responsible for the lab debt.

In 1968, Wiseman established Zipporah Films to produce and distribute his work. To date, he has made a total of ten films, all of feature length (at least 90 minutes). Of the first five, only one was fully financed. The rest were made on speculation, with the filmmaker assuming all risks, and with the support of grants. However, all of the films were eventually accepted for broadcast on public television. The next five films were made under a contract with WNET in New York, a public television station. In the fall of 1976, Zipporah Films entered into another five-year contract with WNET providing for the production of one film each year.

Fred Wiseman's success as a filmmaker is based on devotion, hard work and the willingness to assume the substantial personal risk involved in the production of the early films.

Under the provision of the WNET contracts, the station receives national television broadcast rights to the films, and Wiseman retains film distribution rights. After the film is broadcast on television, it is then distributed directly by Zipporah Films primarily to schools, libraries,



and other nontheatrical exhibitors. Wiseman retains full creative discretion during the making of the film, though the station has the right to approve the subject matter.

Affiliation with a public television station is quite unlike involvement with commercial TV. Wiseman retains full control over his material. He receives far less income for his work than he would receive for a similar amount of programming for commercial television. He is able to make bold films about sensitive topics without interference. And, like many independent documentary filmmakers, his primary source of funding and exhibition is with nonprofit organizations.

The differentiation between Wiseman and the great body of independent filmmakers is his continuing relationship with public television. This is a unique relationship. However, like most independent filmmakers, Wiseman is willing to accept far greater risks and far less potential earnings in exchange for the freedom to make his films to his own satisfaction. Like many independent filmmakers, he has undertaken to distribute his own work for the lack of a reasonable commercial alternative. He earns far less and has to struggle far harder than a contemporary working for a network news department.

### **Independent Film Organizations**

In recent years a number of organizations have been established to support independent filmmaking, either as part of what are sometimes called regional film centers, or as distinct organizations of filmmakers.

The National Endowment for the Arts Public Media Panel began to support regional film centers in the early 1970s. Under an NEA program entitled "Regional Development," matching grants were available to regional organizations "to help them exhibit high quality film and video art; conduct visiting artists programs; provide access to exhibition and production equipment and facilities; provide a resource for film and video research, study and information; train regional development personnel; and integrate and coordinate media resources on a regional basis."<sup>3</sup>

Under the program, requests for funding were accepted for amounts up to \$50,000 (to be matched by the recipient). Many of the regional centers provide services to independent filmmakers. Most screen the work of independent filmmakers; others, such as the University Film Study Center in Cambridge, Ma., run summer workshops. Media Study, Inc. in Buffalo, N.Y., the Media Equipment Resource Center

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<sup>3</sup>Public Media, National Endowment for the Arts, Application Guidelines, Fiscal 1977.

in New York City, Pittsburgh Film-Makers Inc., and others, make film and video production equipment available to independent film and video makers. Some also provide other support services for independent filmmakers, such as the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, which publishes a Video and Filmmakers Travel Sheet, which helps filmmakers organize tours, and a preview network, out of Pittsburgh Film-Makers, which assists independent filmmakers in screening their work for potential users.

In addition to these service organizations, several associations of independent filmmakers have been established by filmmakers in recent years. Most of these organizations are open to all forms of independent filmmaking (and video) and provide a more visible presence for filmmakers within the communities in which they work.

One such organization, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Inc., in New York City, was established in July, 1973, by a group of film and video makers. It presently has about 500 dues paying members. The AIVF conducts monthly meetings at which issues of interest to independent film and video makers are discussed, holds monthly screenings of the work of members, and publishes a monthly newsletter. A primary activity of the organization is representing the interests of its membership with regard to local and federal legislation.

Other organizations, such as the recently founded (1976) Boston Video and Film Foundation and the Independent Media Producers Association of Washington, D.C., are similar in structure.

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## Distribution

Distribution is the only aspect of independent film that is dominated by profit-making companies. Though many sizeable nonprofit distributors do exist, particularly some very large organizations associated with major universities, they cannot compete in size with the profit-making distributors. For over a decade, distributors have been in the enviable position of acquiring films in a heavily oversupplied market and selling in a market where demand has been growing faster than supply. Whatever wealth exists in independent film is concentrated in distribution.

The inequities in the marketplace have resulted in an understandable degree of animosity between filmmaker and distributor. The filmmaker sees the distributor as a blockage in the system. The distributor contends that not enough *good* films are being made. Neither argument is without merit.

A further complication is that fashion plays an inordinate role in all aspects of the moving image mediums. All aspects of film are highly sensitive to fluctuations in the tastes of the marketplace. The special sense of immediacy, the heightened sense of reality and the impact of film on the viewer all encourage films on topical, though often transient, subject matter. The high cost of film production places the filmmaker under pressure to produce films that fill obvious needs, so as to generate the greatest possible return on investment in the shortest period of time. The situation discourages the painstaking production of films of lasting value, places an additional and often incompatible burden on creativity, and discourages the expression of minority opinions.

The film marketplace can be divided into the nontheatrical market, television and theaters. Additional markets also exist (such as 8-mm sales), as well as an infinite number of submarkets. The rights to any of these markets can be bought or sold separately. The primary source of income for independent filmmakers is the nontheatrical market.

## The Nontheatrical Market

The nontheatrical market generally includes everything besides commercial theaters and television — almost any form of film screening that does not occur in a traditional movie theater. Commercial theater owners tend to refer to it as the “16-mm market.” This, of course, refers only to the exhibition print, as a film may be made in any gauge and reduced or enlarged to another. Successful theatrical films are normally reduced to 16 mm for use on television and in the nontheatrical market. Sixteen millimeter films can be but are not often enlarged for theatrical exhibition. (See Exhibit I for the amounts of 35-mm, 16-mm, and 8-mm film processed in the United States in 1973.)

The nontheatrical market can be subdivided into open screenings and closed screenings: open screenings are those to which the general public (or the membership of a large organization, such as students in a university) are admitted; closed screenings are those at which the audience is predetermined before the film is shown, such as a classroom.

### Open Exhibition

Open exhibition is basically an extension of theatrical exhibition. Though many distributors insist that the films be shown only to members of a specific affinity group, such as students of a university or members of a museum, in practice most screenings are open to the general public.

The primary difference between commercial theaters and nontheatrical film screenings is that in the latter close attention is paid to the programming of films. The significance for the distributor is that a nontheatrical film programmer is free to show any type of film of any length. Commercial theaters limit themselves to narrative films of over 90 minutes in length.

Since nontheatrical theaters sometimes seat over 1,000, the income from a successful engagement can be substantial. It is primarily a rental market; films are shown once or twice and returned to the distributor.

Some museums, such as the University Art Museum's Pacific Film Archive or the venerable Museum of Modern Art, present films almost continuously through the week. The Museum of Modern Art plays to over 250,000 patrons a year.

Over the last few years, libraries have become a major source of film exhibitions. Though libraries often limit their programs to free screenings of films from their own collection, they have become increasingly prominent as exhibitors of independent film.

A recent development in nontheatrical exhibitions has been the nonprofit theater, such as the Film Forum in New York, the Theater

Vanguard in Los Angeles, or Center Screen in Boston. Though all three function as nontheatrical showcases, they admit the general public and in no way limit the extent of their advertising. They are also theatrical enough to attract the critical press. As they show films of little interest to theatrical showcases, these theaters avoid conflict with commercial theaters. Since the limitations that commercial theaters place on themselves are convenient though arbitrary, a substantial amount of high-quality material is available for such quasi-theatrical exhibition. All have nonprofit status and are eligible for grant support.

(Open exhibition is covered in greater detail in the chapter devoted to exhibition.)

## EXHIBIT I

## MOTION PICTURE FILM PROCESSED IN THE UNITED STATES

Based on Department of Commerce Estimates for 1972. Figures in Hours of Film

	LA Area	Metro NYC	Chicago	Remainder US	Total US
<b>35mm</b>					
color film	115,983	44,817	2,185	5,951	168,935
black & white	13,511	10,944	1,063	3,403	28,921
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>129,494</b>	<b>55,761</b>	<b>3,248</b>	<b>9,354</b>	<b>197,856</b>
<b>% of TOTAL</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>16 mm</b>					
color film	240,892	228,649	49,455	183,358	656,747
black & white	60,394	143,188	10,609	73,112	287,303
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>301,286</b>	<b>371,837</b>	<b>60,064</b>	<b>256,470</b>	<b>944,050</b>
<b>% of TOTAL</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>8 mm*</b>					
color film	78,333	67,070	53,451	85,996	284,851
black & white	27,402	64,248	13,225	39,947	144,823
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105,735</b>	<b>131,318</b>	<b>66,676</b>	<b>125,943</b>	<b>429,674</b>
<b>% of TOTAL</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Running time for 8-mm film is based on speed of 24 frames per second. However, much 8-mm film is projected at 18 fps, which increases running time by 25%.

### Closed Exhibition

Closed exhibition—the screening of films in classrooms and other limited audience situations—produces the bulk of the income for independent films. The Land Report estimates that in 1973 about 90% of the total of over \$60 million in nontheatrical film revenues came from education, grade school through college. Public schools account for close to 80% of all audio visual sales; colleges, 7.4% and libraries, 3.2%. In addition to schools, any number of other situations exist in which films are shown to predetermined audiences: cruise ships, prisons, hospitals, in-service training for a wide variety of professions, industry, and government.

Both the study of films and the use of films in education grew out of the use of film in the Second World War. Spurred by an Army Personnel Service study showing that the use of films cut training by at least 30%, over 1,338 army training films were produced in World War II. In addition, over 43,306 prints of feature films and 33,236 entertainment shorts were distributed to the troops between 1943 and the end of the war. The Signal Corps of the United States Army estimates that between May 1944 and June 1945, about 145,000,000 troops attended 600,000 screenings.

Few readers of this report will have had no experience with educational films, but the educational film of today is a far cry from the staid productions of as little as a decade ago. As the use of film has grown as an educational tool, the sophistication of its users has also markedly increased. The futuristic view that film could replace teachers has been supplanted by the pragmatic understanding that film can enrich and enliven the educational experience. Documentary films have been particularly adaptable to this trend.

Closed exhibition can be subdivided into a rental and a sales market. Though many of the users of films in classrooms and other such institutions rent films, the repeated use of many of the films in many classes, year after year, makes the purchase of prints a reasonable proposition. Purchase prices are normally about ten times the cost of a rental, though this can vary substantially. The main attraction of print sales to distributors is the reduction of marketing and handling costs and the accelerated return on investment. A large number of the aggressive distributors that carry independent film, such as Pyramid and Phoenix Films, consider rentals as primarily a convenience for their customers. Some institutions, such as public libraries, only purchase films and have no rental budgets at all.

*Hope Reports* estimated that in 1973 the total market for nontheatrical motion pictures was \$126 million. As is mentioned above, about 80% of this is generated by secondary schools (\$100.8 million). The remaining

\$25 million is divided between film societies, government purchases, libraries, museums, colleges, and other film users, and includes all of the open exhibition market.

### Distributors

The Landers Film Service lists 450 primary distributors in the United States. A primary distributor is the agency which holds the basic rights to market the film. Secondary rights may then be sold on a geographic, industry, or market basis to various subdistributors. For example, libraries that permit borrowers to use films without a charge are a form of subdistribution. Other subdistributors, working much like libraries, purchase films and permit others to utilize them, usually for a fee. Some, such as the University Film Study Center in Cambridge, Mass., have large collections of films for use by member schools.

We are primarily interested in those companies that market independent film, either exclusively or in combination with other films. The largest distributors (which all specialize in educational films) include Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corp., Coronet Institutional Films, BFA Educational Media, and McGraw-Hill. The Land Report estimates that these companies each earn between \$5 and \$11 million a year on film sales and together sell 60% of the films sold to educational institutions. They sell primarily to schools and handle almost no independent films.

The next largest group of distributors has annual sales that range from about \$6 million to about \$500,000. This group includes fewer than twenty companies, such as Films Inc., Time-Life (which also distributes television programming in 16 mm), Macmillan, Learning Corporation of America, Churchill, Pyramid, and others. These companies often handle a sizeable amount of independent film, though some, such as Janus Films, Films Inc., and Audio Brandon (a subsidiary of Macmillan) primarily market theatrical film reduced to 16 mm. Sales figures are hard to come by and are based on speculation. No commercial distributor is interested in revealing total dollar volume, but most are willing to hazard informed guesses as to the size of the competition. However, it does seem clear that it is these medium-sized companies that have had the most significant growth in recent years.

Beyond these large companies exists a wide variety of distribution agencies, ranging from highly specialized and efficient operations of some size and profitability catering to specialized markets, such as New Day Films and the Film-makers' Cooperative, to individual filmmakers earning a few hundred dollars a year through other forms of self-distribution. It has been estimated that 90% of the film distributors

handle fewer than five films and are either self-distributors or are companies that have grown out of self-distribution.

### Marketing

Most simply, three things sell films: information, entertainment, and art. A film that qualifies strongly in all three areas should sell well. A film that is strong in one of these areas but weak in the others will have a more specialized market.

Films are marketed either by salesmen and regional sales offices or by direct mail promotion. The large educational film distributors traditionally rely on salesmen. As companies get smaller, their reliance on direct mail increases. Small distributors rely almost totally on direct mail advertising.

General estimates place the cost of marketing nontheatrical films at between \$4,000 and \$8,000 for a single title. Costs (including the cost of production) are usually covered after the sale of approximately 250 prints. A successful film is expected to sell about 500 prints. Most sell less. Theoretically, a limit of 5,000 print sales exists for general interest films and an 1,800 maximum for didactic films.

The Land Report estimates that no more than a dozen general use films have sold over 5,000 copies.

All of these figures represent a theoretical norm which is rarely adhered to. *Eye of the Beholder*, a film on individual perception made and distributed by Stuart Reynolds, is reported to have sold over 8,000 prints since 1958; some small, efficient distributors can enter the market for under \$3,000 and reach a breakeven point at 20 print sales.

The primary expense items in marketing a film are:

1. Internegative (the intermediate printing material used to protect the camera original)
2. Preview prints (the prints used to show prospective purchasers; they usually have a limited life due to wear)
3. Promotional material (primary mailings and a catalog)
4. Travel
5. Facilities
6. Postage
7. Interest on capital
8. Labor

The Land study reported that a West Coast distributor figures his cost breakdown in the following manner:



Production and print amortization	24%
Selling costs (including salaries, commissions, mailings, and catalog)	28%
General administrative cost	18%
Producer's share	18%
Distributor's share	12%
<hr/>	
Total	100%

Contracts between filmmakers and distributors take three basic forms: 1) total ownership of the film by distributor, 2) a percentage of the net income for the filmmaker, and 3) a percentage of gross income for the filmmaker. Normally, contracts with primary distributors give all rights in a film to the single distributor. However, separate arrangements can be made for any film market.

Rarely do distributors purchase an independent film outright. Short films are usually purchased outright when used for commercial theater exhibition, but so few shorts are shown in movie theaters today that this is a negligible market.

Distribution contracts in which the filmmaker receives a percentage of net income are becoming increasingly rare. Such agreements are problematic because of the difficulty in defining legitimately deductible expenses. Under such contracts the filmmaker would receive a specified percentage, often 50%, of the income remaining after deductions for prints and advertising. Administrative costs would be paid by the distributor out of his share and production costs are paid by the producer out of his share. In essence, the two parties, distributor and filmmaker, agree to share the costs of marketing a film.

The most common agreement gives the filmmaker a percentage, usually in the 15% to 25% range, of gross income received by the distributor. Under this arrangement, a distributor covers all costs, and the relationship is relieved of the burden of determining allowable expenses. It is far easier to audit arrangements based on percentages of gross income.

Advances against income to filmmakers have also become increasingly rare in recent years as many distributors prefer to utilize all capital for promotion. The Land Report estimates that when there are advances they usually run between \$250 and \$5,000. A film with unusually large expectation of profit, however, can command advances far above the average.

### A Financial Model

The *Hope Reports*, issued in 1975, calculate that the average independent film produced in 1973 cost just over \$14,000 and was between 11 and 23 minutes in length.<sup>4</sup> The average sponsored film of the same length for the same period cost about \$21,000. As most costs in a film production, such as shooting stock and processing, are fixed by length, we can assume that the primary differences between sponsored and independent production are the fees paid to the filmmakers and others working on the films. The independent filmmaker normally retains the total rights to the film after production is completed, though this varies with different funding arrangements. The sponsored film is usually owned by the sponsor and all income derived by the filmmaker is, therefore, a part of the production costs. The difference between the two figures (\$21,000 minus \$14,000) can be understood to represent the independent filmmaker's deferred fee.

Based on the above information, it is possible to develop a general model of the financial history of a hypothetical film. Let us assume that a filmmaker has raised \$14,000 from various sources which have to be paid back at 12% interest, a minimal return on investment, and that the filmmaker has invested an additional \$7,000 in deferred payments, primarily his or her time and energy—making the total budget \$21,000. Let us also define the film as being 20 minutes long, with sound, and in color.

The standard offer that will be made for this film by distributors will be (in exchange for total world rights to the film for a period of ten years) 20% of all gross revenues from sales and rentals. The distributor will pay all expenses out of his share. Though a small advance might be included, it is an advance against revenues, so it would not affect the filmmaker's total income from the film.

A distributor would usually offer a film of this sort for about \$30 per use for rental and about \$250 per print for sale. (Both of these figures are reasonably low to make the following calculations conservative.) In a 20%-of-gross-income arrangement, the filmmaker would receive \$7.50 for each rental and \$62.50 for each sale.

Simple interest on the filmmaker's debt for the first year would be about \$2,520, including the interest on his deferred payments invested in the project.

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<sup>4</sup>Though this figure represents a plausible "average" for the sake of our model, many independent filmmakers regularly work on far smaller budgets, particularly in the case of avantgarde filmmakers. The figure is used primarily to delineate the relationship of costs and income and not to describe a hypothetical "average" film.

For the filmmaker to keep current with the interest alone on the investment, about 336 rentals or 40 print sales, or some combination, will have to occur during the first year. If the debt is to be paid over a period of four years, an additional 700 rentals or 84 print sales, or combination of the two, will have to occur during the first year. (See Exhibit II for calculations on number of rentals or sales necessary to pay off debt over a period of four years.)

By the calculations in Exhibit II, if the film is reasonably popular, after paying off his debt the filmmaker would earn approximately \$9,100 over the four years. At the end of the four years, continued income would depend only on the popularity of the film and the filmmaker's arrangements with the investors. Films normally do not begin to produce income until they have been on the market for at least a year. A certain amount of debt, therefore, would be passed on for the first year or so, increasing financing costs and further delaying profit. Even if we are dealing with an unusually popular film, the figures are not encouraging.

A variety of ways exist by which the filmmaker is able to ameliorate the risks. A filmmaker may either reduce the obligations to investors, increase the profit from distribution, or not regard the film as a primary source of income. The last method is the simplest. A filmmaker may not expect to profit directly from distribution of an independently produced film, but may regard it as a means of increasing income from other sources, such as speaking fees, teaching, sponsored films, or other forms of employment.

#### EXHIBIT II

##### NUMBER OF RENTALS OR SALES NEEDED OVER A FOUR-YEAR PERIOD TO PAY OFF A DEBT OF \$21,000 UNDER STANDARD (20%) DISTRIBUTION CONTRACT

Year	Debt	Interest	Principal	Total Payment	No. Rentals*	No. Sales*
Year 1	21,000	2,520	5,250	7,770	1,036	124
Year 2	15,750	1,890	5,250	7,140	952	114
Year 3	10,500	1,260	5,250	6,510	868	104
Year 4	5,240	630	5,250	5,880	784	94
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,300</b>	<b>21,000</b>	<b>27,300</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>436</b>

\*Calculations are based on rentals or sales. A combination of rentals and sales would reduce both figures, with each sale equalling about 8.3 rentals.

Obligations to investors can be reduced by utilizing grant funding (which does not have to be repaid) to cover a percentage of costs, or by finding a single customer for a specific aspect of the film, such as foreign or American television producers, who are willing to pay handsomely for limited use of the film in a specific market.

Increasing the profit from distributors can be accomplished by a variety of methods. The most common is for the filmmaker to engage in some form of self-distribution. Several of the major nontheatrical distributors, such as Pyramid, began as self-distribution operations. Avantgarde filmmakers have always been left to publicize and distribute their own work. Many of the early cinema verité filmmakers formed self-distribution companies, including Leacock-Pennebaker, the Maysles Brothers, and Fred Wiseman's Zipporah Films. There are also a large number of small producer-distributors of educational films, such as Documentary Educational Resources and Polymorph Films.

### **Avantgarde Film and Alternative Forms of Distribution**

There is almost no commercial distribution of avantgarde films in the United States. In those few cases where a film has a secondary usage, e.g., if it is a poetic essay on childbirth that can be marketed as an educational film, or if it is a film which satisfies the needs of many libraries to have "the art of film" in their collections, commercial distributors will handle them. But in general avantgarde films are not, in the usual sense of the term, marketed (although a few small distributors do handle avantgarde film, and the number seems to be growing).

The most venerable small distributor of avantgarde film was the Cinema 16 collection, organized by Amos Vogel as an outgrowth of his 1950s screening program, later sold to Grove Press during the heyday of "underground" film in the 1960s. Two recent entries of significance are the Serious Business Company in Berkeley, Ca., and the Castelli-Sonnabend Galleries. The Serious Business Company describes itself: "A distributor for independent filmmakers. We are committed to film as an art form and our collection includes experimental and documentary work." The Castelli operation, which offers videotapes and films by various artists, was originally started as a service to traditional artists represented by the gallery who wished to work in film or video. The collection now includes works by Yvonne Rainer, Paul Sharits, and Michael Snow among others, who are known primarily as filmmakers. Both are private concerns interested in making a profit and both publicize their films through well designed and competitive catalogs.

In the late 1960s several attempts were made to package short films and distribute them as "film concerts." The New Cinema Package offered by Janus Films was composed of 22 films in several groupings. Contemporary, Pyramid, Universal and Grove Press made similar attempts. In general, the packages had a bad record on all accounts, producing insufficient returns and incurring high costs. Other such tours include the Cinema 12 series organized by Mike Getz. Cinema 12 circulates independent films to commercial theaters for late-night screening. The program was reasonably successful in the late 1960s (and generally well thought of by filmmakers who received one dollar per minute of film each time the program was screened) but has found it increasingly difficult to maintain audiences with a strict diet of avant-garde film. It remains one of the few programs actively placing short, independent films in commercial theaters.

What has served the avantgarde film community in the place of conventional distributors are film cooperatives. These organizations, all modeled on the Film-makers' Cooperative in New York, serve as booking agents for avantgarde filmmakers. The coops only rent films, they do not sell prints and they do no promotion besides the printing of a catalog.

Though they hardly meet the description of a marketing agency, especially when compared to the aggressive short film distributors which dominate the business, cooperatives provide essential services to independent filmmakers.

Film cooperatives grew out of general discontent with commercial distributors. The first, the Film-makers' Cooperative, was founded in 1961. The Cooperative was organized so that the filmmaker could retain total control of his or her film. It will accept any film into the collection. On depositing a film, the filmmaker becomes a member and gets to vote for board members. Board membership is restricted to cooperative members.

Cooperatives return substantial percentages of income to the filmmaker, usually between 65% and 75% of gross income. From the remaining 35% or 25%, the cooperatives receive orders, ship and inspect films, bill customers, and print a catalog of their holdings whenever the funding is available. Since members profit from their involvement in cooperatives, much like stockholders in a corporation, the cooperatives do not have nonprofit status and cannot receive grants.

The Film-makers' Cooperative is by far the largest such organization, holding over 2,800 films by 520 filmmakers. In a decade, its catalog has grown from pamphlet to telephone-book size. In 1972, film coops in the United States earned approximately \$151,000, of which just under \$100,000 was returned to filmmakers. In 1976, the Film-makers'

Cooperative had gross receipts of \$88,245, or just under \$170 per filmmaker. Canyon Cinema, which is the second largest cooperative and is located in the San Francisco Bay area, had 1,400 films by 350 members at the end of 1976, with total receipts for film rentals of about \$25,000 for that year, down from \$54,000 in 1970. The income of the cooperatives has been cyclical, tending to follow the rises and declines of the broader nontheatrical film market. The Film-Makers' Cooperative reported gross film rentals of \$120,000 in 1968; \$90,000 in 1970, and \$100,000 in 1972. Canyon Cinema reported gross rentals of \$50,000 in 1969, \$39,000 in 1970, and \$39,000 in 1972.

The cooperatives are very passive in the marketing of films. They do not recommend titles and will not assist customers in programming. One cooperative director put it in these terms: cooperatives "act as a disinterested source and a point of access, no more, no less." They can be only marginally considered distributors. However, they have played a significant if not key role in the development of avantgarde film. Administered by sorely underpaid and devoted staff, they have served as clearing houses for films and information. For over a decade the film cooperatives have been the archivists, distributors, mail drops, and occasional employer for filmmakers, from the totally unknown amateur whose films never leave the shelf, to major figures such as Andy Warhol and Stan Brakhage who have substantial reputations.

The avantgarde film market consists primarily of museums and universities. Many avantgarde filmmakers teach and, thus, rent the work of fellow artists. Also film curators in museums increasingly are trained professionals; the interest in avantgarde film has likewise increased. In addition, recent years have seen the development of small, independent showcases, such as the Anthology Film Archives and the Film Forum, both in New York City, and the NAME Gallery in Chicago, which show substantial amounts of avantgarde film.

The three primary sources of film related income for avantgarde filmmakers are print sales, rentals and personal appearances. Of the three, the first holds the greatest promise, the second is the most traditional, and the third provides the most regular source of income to many filmmakers, though touring substantially reduces the time available for filmmaking.

A moderately well-known filmmaker can earn occasional extra income doing lectures with films much as poets make appearances to read their own work. Fees range from under \$100 to amounts approaching \$1,000. Generally, fees range between \$200 and \$500 on the East Coast and from \$100 to \$200 on the West Coast. In addition to an income of a few thousand dollars a year, such shows provide the means for a filmmaker to build a reputation and market films.

Sales of prints have always had the most potential as an income producer. Primary customers are museums, public libraries and universities. Sales demand a substantial marketing campaign and are extremely difficult to project. A popular avantgarde film may sell ten or twenty prints a year, while an unusually successful educational film can sell up to 1,000 prints a year. Since the film cooperatives do not normally sell prints, it is left totally to the individual filmmaker to either find a private distributor or handle the details himself.

European Television is also an occasional customer for American avantgarde film, particularly German TV. The sale of a 30-minute film to television usually returns between \$2,000 and \$3,000, minus agent's commission.

Rentals are the traditional source of income for filmmakers primarily because of the reliability of the cooperatives. Both filmmakers and customers can depend on them.

### New Day Films

A variation of the film cooperative concept is a cooperative organization with membership restricted to films with a similar market, as opposed to the Film-makers' Cooperative which accepts all films. New Day Films is such an organization.

New Day was founded in 1972 as a distribution cooperative for films about women. It currently represents fifteen films by twelve filmmakers and has opened its membership to include a broader range of films. The New Day catalog opens with the following statement:

We formed New Day Films because we found traditional distribution channels either inadequate to our needs or inaccessible. Many distribution companies are reluctant to handle controversial films that challenge socially acceptable norms, or films which, while useful, might not turn a high profit. Most monetary rewards go to the distributor; consequently, filmmakers have little hope of earning back funds spent on past films, or saving for future projects. Finally, filmmakers are completely cut off from participation in the distribution process, and lose all control of their work and contact with their audiences.

New Day functions as a vehicle for pooling resources. By sharing publicity and promotion, the members have been able to gain far more attention than they would have attracted as individuals, and are able to effect substantial savings on printing, mailing, and other services, which constitute much of the cost of distribution.

By most any form of evaluation, New Day has been a successful endeavor. Though other filmmakers have done equally as well, there is little question that the potential markets for New Day films have been

effectively cultivated. New Day has been able to find or create audiences for its films. Commercial distributors are reluctant to develop new markets for films but concentrate on finding films that fit into already defined and established markets.

Unlike the Film-makers' Cooperative, New Day is actively involved with marketing members' films. The members participate as a group in the mailing of brochures and the publication of a catalog, but are individually responsible for the distribution of their own films. There is no central office or individual in charge. All of the New Day members use a commercial booking agent which processes orders for a fee. Such agents normally charge between \$4 and \$7 per print order for shipping, inspection, and billing. As a great deal of the New Day business comes from rentals, a large print inventory must be maintained.

In a recent article in *Filmmakers Newsletter*,<sup>5</sup> one member of New Day estimated that, for a half-hour color film, about \$3,000 is needed to enter distribution. This would pay for 10 prints for previews and rentals, the design, printing and mailing of 5,000 flyers, and initial operating capital. Since mailings and print costs must all be paid long before income is received, insufficient capitalization can produce severe cash flow problems.

Despite the fact that membership in a cooperative such as New Day can give a filmmaker a substantial headstart on marketing a film, it is still the responsibility of the individual filmmaker to promote his or her film. However, a cooperative arrangement can substantially increase the filmmakers' percentage of profit. One New Day filmmaker with a reasonably popular film (though neither the most nor the least popular in the catalog) reports that in the first two years of distribution, over 66% of gross income remained after all marketing expenses were paid, declining to 51% in the third year and 33% in the fourth, for an average profit of 54% of gross over the four-year period.

### **Theatrical Distribution**

Commercial theaters are, by and large, specialized in the exhibition of recently released, feature-length films in 35 mm. Most are owned or managed in large chains. General Cinema Corp., the world's largest theater owner, is reported to own over 800 theaters. The individually owned and operated theater is becoming a rarity.

Films for commercial theaters are usually booked through centralized booking agents from a limited number of distributors. *Variety* estimates that in 1976, 21 distributors handled the 185 films released that year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>*Filmmakers Newsletter*, November 1976.

<sup>6</sup>*Variety*, October 6, 1976, p. 7.



Lavishly promoted films with substantial, prerelease publicity demand extraordinary guarantees. Film buyers rarely look at a film before booking it. They rely on prerelease publicity and returns from other theaters. Rights to exhibit new releases are "bought" through a bidding process. Theater representatives will make an offer involving percentages of receipts, guarantees, advances, length of run, and many other variables. The process is complicated and constantly evolving. It is a highly competitive business and little reliance is placed on individual subjective likes or dislikes.

The current film shortage has aggravated an already difficult situation. (See Exhibit III for figures on films released in 1948 through 1976). To increase profit and reduce costs, in recent years theater owners have dramatically increased the number of screens by "splitting" their theaters into two or more separate screening rooms. During the same period, producers have continued to make fewer films each year. Theater profits have become dependent on the occasional record-setting film rather than on an even flow of quality films throughout the year.

## EXHIBIT III

## THEATER CENSUS — 1948 to 1975\*

Year	No. of Hardtops	No. of Drive-ins	Total No. Theaters	Film Releases (& principle distributors)	U.S. Population
1948	17,811	820	18,631	398 (15)	145,746,000
1954	14,716	3,775	18,491	294 (12)	159,695,000
1958	12,291	4,063	16,354	327 (12)	172,226,000
1963	9,150	3,502	12,652	203 (14)	186,493,000
1967	9,330	3,670	13,000	229 (18)	193,420,000
1971	10,300	3,770	14,070	281 (22)	206,291,000
1972	10,580	3,790	14,370	273 (24)	208,234,000
1973	10,850	3,800	14,650	229 (22)	209,860,000
1974	11,612	3,772	15,384	223 (24)	211,018,000
1975	12,168	3,801	15,969	182 (21)	212,634,000

\*The table is taken from the October 6, 1976 issue of *Variety*. When interpreting the figures, it should be realized that much of the recent growth in the number of theaters is due to splitting theaters into multiple-screen operations. Joseph Alterman, Executive Director of the National Association of Theater Owners, estimates that the size of the average auditorium in 1948 was 750 seats, while today that figure is around 500 seats.

On the fringe of the commercial theater business there exist a number of independent operators who show films which are of marginal interest to the large chains. Dan Talbot, the founder of the New Yorker theater, one of the first major art theaters, estimates that between 1955 and 1963, roughly 600 such theaters existed in the United States.

Unfortunately, this number was substantially reduced when major theater chains began showing foreign films, such as the work of Federico Fellini and Ingmar Bergman. Current estimates put the number of art theaters at well under 100. The few art houses that now exist show "repertory programs," primarily classic feature films, and occasionally, if the theaters are equipped for 16-mm film, independent films. Almost all art theaters are now located in major cities. Though such theaters can provide extensive and valuable critical attention to a film, they cannot provide sufficient income with which to mount a new production.

The successful exhibition of independent films in movie theaters is very rare. However, it is not unknown. It is difficult to generalize on how it is done as each film tends to find its own way to the marketplace. The one common factor each successful entry has is a filmmaker who is willing to devote a great deal of time and energy to the project, or one who has the necessary financial resources to purchase the requisite skills.

Two films which have been successful in theatrical as well as nontheatrical distribution are *Antonia*, a documentary about an unrecognized woman conductor by Jill Godmilow and Judy Collins, and *Hester Street*, a narrative film about turn-of-the-century immigrants on New York's lower East Side by Joan Micklin Silver. Both of these films were independent productions and both were able to achieve reasonable theatrical play; *Antonia* was screened at some 20, and *Hester Street* at some 800, theaters.

*Antonia*, being a documentary film, had a number of immediate strikes against it. Its length (58 minutes) made it too long for classrooms and too short for theaters. Its subject and style, a sensitive portrait of a 73-year-old-woman, were not easily promotable. What it had in its favor was the willingness of one of its makers, Jill Godmilow, to devote a substantial amount of time—essentially a full year—to the promotion and marketing of the film. She was also fortunate to have the assistance of Jerry Bruck, Jr., who had already successfully distributed his documentary on I. F. Stone to commercial theaters.

The first problem facing Godmilow was the need to attract the attention of theater owners. This was achieved through an extended run at the Whitney Museum New American Cinema series. The film received exciting and substantial press coverage in a large number of local and national publications, far more than is usually accorded films

screened at the Whitney. The additional publicity was the result of the efforts of the filmmakers, as well as of the topical nature of the film: a talented conductor who never had a major career because of her gender.

After playing at the Whitney, *Antonia* was able to achieve theatrical screenings outside of New York. A particularly successful run at the Orson Welles theater in Cambridge, Mass., gave it additional support.

A film which plays 20 theaters is a very small success in terms of major feature films. However, for a film made on a small budget (under \$100,000) and with substantial potential in the nontheatrical market, such screenings provide both direct income as well as drawing the attention of potential nontheatrical customers.

The total cost of the theatrical marketing of *Antonia* was about \$13,000, of which \$7,000 went to the making of a 35-mm blow-up of the 16-mm film. Beyond expenses, the film earned just under \$25,000 in its theatrical release. The success gained in its theatrical break led to \$33,000 in TV sales, of which \$15,000 came from public television and the rest from sales abroad, such as \$3,000 from Swedish TV. At the end of the theatrical run, the film was placed in nontheatrical distribution with Phoenix Films, a medium-sized company that specializes in the sale of prints to schools and libraries. During the first ten months in nontheatrical distribution, the film produced gross receipts over \$130,000.

The above story does not give sufficient credit to the intense personal struggle involved in promoting a film in theatrical release. No reasonable offer was made to handle the film by a theatrical distributor, and interest on the part of nontheatrical distributors was negligible until the film had achieved notoriety.

*Antonia's* profit figures would not be exciting to industry feature film producers. However, the film's reasonably wide exposure did provide an acceptable return on investment to its backers.

*Hester Street* offers a somewhat different example of an independent film finding its own course to a successful theatrical release. It also had several strikes against it: it had no recognizable star; it was seen as having a limited "ethnic" appeal, and it was in black and white.

The film, the story of a young Jewish woman emigrating to the United States in the early twentieth century, was written and directed by Joan Micklin Silver, who had previously written several unproduced film scripts and made a few short films. After several failures to gain financial backing, Joan Silver's husband, Raphael Silver, head of an Ohio based real estate business, raised the necessary \$395,000 budget himself.

*Hester Street* received its first notice in the Cannes Film Festival and was later acclaimed at the USA Film Festival in Dallas. However, it was unable to find a reasonable distribution offer so the Silvers decided

to distribute the film themselves. This was done by establishing a skilled distribution operation with an experienced staff that was able to place the film in over 800 theaters and produce a domestic gross in the area of \$5 million.

The experienced professionals were also able to provide the additional financial backing necessary to exploit the film; for example, the New York opening for the film cost \$30,000 (a modest figure by industry standards) and the 106 prints needed for distribution cost \$400 each. Despite the fact that formal reviews were mixed, word-of-mouth prevailed and the film was able to find an audience beyond "ethnic" groups.

The Silvers were able to successfully produce a film for a comparatively low budget, to successfully market the film, and to provide a lucrative return on investment — all without the assistance of industry backing at any point in the process.

### **Other Forms of Film Distribution**

A number of nonprofit organizations offer films for rent or for sale. Perhaps the oldest of these is the Museum of Modern Art which almost since the inception of the Museum film program in 1935 has been offering a carefully chosen collection of films of artistic significance, including silent classics, documentaries, and avantgarde films.

Several universities offer substantial collections of films for public use. These collections can be large and contain a wide variety of material; however, university collections contain primarily curriculum films. Usually, they rent films for a lower price than commercial sources.

Among the largest collections at universities are those at Boston University which has some 9,000 titles; at the University of Indiana which has some 12,000 titles, containing much material produced for public television; at the University of Illinois (11,000 titles); at the University of Minnesota (8,600 titles). A directory of 16-mm film collections in colleges and universities compiled by Allan Mirwis in 1972 contains data on 416 libraries of which 86 offered films for rental outside of their own states. The Land Report estimated that the total rental value for college film libraries in 1972 was \$6,250,000 for 1,122,710 bookings.

Just as the federal government is the largest single producer of non-theatrical film, it is also one of the largest distributors. The National Audio Visual Center of the General Services Administration sells or rents some 8,500 titles made by federal agencies. In 1976, the approximate volume of the NAC was \$2.3 million. Though this figure alone is large enough to place the NAC among the top ten nontheatrical distributors,

the figure does not reflect the true size of the NAC as the prices charged are from 25% to 60% lower than standard commercial rentals.

Public libraries have also become increasingly important as distributors of films. Libraries are primarily subdistributors as they purchase prints and distribute them within a specific library system. Procedures vary from library to library, though most offer prints of 16-mm films for use outside of the library without cost to the user. Some libraries will loan films only to individuals, such as the Donnell Library in New York, while others insist on institutional affiliation. (For more information on libraries, see *Non-Theatrical Exhibition*.)

The Educational Film Library Association, founded in 1943, provides a variety of services to film libraries, including a regular publication, *Sightlines*, and the American Film Festival, held annually in New York since 1958. The festival is a showcase for recently released 16-mm films, organized to recognize the efforts of filmmakers and to stimulate the use of films in libraries, universities, schools, museums and other community agencies. In 1976, 767 films were entered in the festival attended by over 1,500 individuals, primarily filmmakers, distributors and film librarians.



## Funding

The use of film as an educational tool since the end of the Second World War has provided the financial foundation for the development of independent filmmaking. Though only a minority of the educational films made in the U.S. each year are independently produced, federal funding has been so substantial that the educational marketplace has provided support for these films. The support is both direct, in the form of film sales, and indirect, in the form of a generally expanded film marketplace and increased awareness of nontheatrical film.

An exact figure of what percentage of films produced are independently made is not available. However, the *Hope Reports* estimated that in 1973, out of about 1,780 films released in the educational marketplace, approximately 550 titles were independently produced (about 30%). These include a variety of experimental, avantgarde, documentary, and other independent films made by individuals. The independent films accounted for about 23% of the total gross receipts for that year for educational films. Of the 399 films selected for screening at the American Film Festival (a major trade show for nontheatrical films) in 1976, approximately 40% or 151 titles could be identified as independent productions. Based on these estimates, it is reasonable to assume that between 30% and 40% of the nontheatrical films in circulation are independent films.

### NDEA, ESEA and Other Federal Programs

The federal government is either directly or indirectly the purchaser of the vast majority of the independent film sold in the United States. Some estimates indicate that 80% of all nontheatrical film revenues are derived from public schools, and almost all of this funding comes from

federal sources. Museum, library and university film programs also receive substantial federal support.

The first major federal aid to education program was the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. Subchapter III of that act calls for financial assistance for instruction in academic subjects; Subchapter VII calls for research and experimentation in more effective utilization of television, radio, motion picture, and related media for educational purposes.

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed. Under Title I of this act, support is provided for disadvantaged children, and under Title II, large sums are allocated for the purchase of school library resources, textbooks, and other instructional material.

The *Hope Reports* estimate that in the 18 years following the passage of the NDEA in September 1958, over \$2.1 billion has been granted for instructional media equipment and materials. Added to this is an estimated \$619 million in state matching funds. The Land survey estimates that between 1966 and 1972 about \$139,713,311 was made available for audio visual materials under ESEA Title II. Hope also estimates that during 1973 a total of \$3.5 billion was spent on audio-visual materials in the United States. The result of this influx of substantial federal funds was accelerated growth in the audio visual marketplace, climaxing in a 100% increase from \$22 million in 1965 to \$44 million in 1966 in funds for library resource materials under ESEA, Title II.

In addition to support for elementary and secondary schools, the Higher Education Act gives support to college libraries to acquire materials under its Title II, and according to the Land Survey, between 1969 and 1972 gave \$25,433,000. College and university libraries generally make less use of film strips, records, and other such audio visual material than elementary and high schools. A higher percentage of the higher education audio-visual dollar goes to 16-mm film.

In 1974, Congress passed an amendment revising funding patterns, the result of which was substantially reduced funding available for film purchase and consequent decline of the educational film market. Under the new legislation, several aspects of educational funding were consolidated. The testing, guidance, and counseling aspects of ESEA Title II and NDEA Subchapter III were combined with ESEA Title III. This new arrangement permitted funds which had been previously restricted to the purchase of materials to be used for the payment of staff salaries. This change coincided with a period of inflation as well as budget cuts in the educational systems. The Land Report estimates that in 1974 ESEA funding was cut from \$1,911 million to \$39 million, and,



naturally, schools chose to maintain staff at the expense of acquisition of materials.

Though all aspects of independent film are not totally tied to the funding of educational institutions, even the filmmakers furthest from the educational market, the avantgarde filmmakers, feel the effect of these funding shifts as part of the general flow of funds through the nontheatrical film marketplace. The increased use of film in schools and libraries has led to an increased awareness of the various aspects of film. Though the large corporate production and distribution organizations were the major beneficiaries of the federal funds, the increased activity made room for the independent filmmaker within the marketplace.

### **Funds for Production**

The relationship between independent filmmakers and nonprofit organizations is of primary significance. Whether it is through direct grants or from rental fees and print purchases, the bulk of the funds that support independent filmmaking in the United States are from nonprofit institutions. Income originating with private corporate interests or from individual admissions constitutes a small portion of the total income. (In those cases where short films are commissioned by private corporations or individuals, the funding source determines the content and quality of the film and places such work beyond our definition of independent filmmaking.)

Also, when we consider the entire nontheatrical film community, nonprofit organizations compose the bulk of the market for independent films. Whether the films are purchased by schools or libraries, or shown in museums, government funding is the key factor providing income for distributors and filmmakers. Many of these organizations receive substantial federal funding.

In addition, the federal government is the largest single producer of nontheatrical film. According to figures compiled by the General Services Administration (GSA) in a survey of the twenty federal agencies represented on the Federal Audio Visual Committee, in fiscal year 1976, the Government contracted with about 250 separate film producers and 100 video producers for 1,303 films averaging 17 minutes in length. (According to Thomas Hope, editor of Hope Reports, there are about 3,000 film and 750 video producers in the United States.) In addition, government agencies themselves produced over 1,653 films internally using their own facilities and staff. The total cost of the 2,956 films produced by the federal government in 1976 was \$17,533,846.

## Grants

Many independent filmmakers consider grants to be the only source of production funding. Grants fall into two basic categories: film grants and subject grants. Film grants are awarded to support some aspect of filmmaking, while subject grants are made to support the dissemination of information on a specific subject.

The primary source of film grants is the Public Media Program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which supports filmmakers either directly or indirectly through the American Film Institute (AFI). In 1976, this NEA program was renamed "Media Arts."

Both the NEA and the AFI administer grants to filmmakers in which the nature of the proposed project is secondary to the skill and artistry of the filmmaker.

The Media Arts program is presently undergoing substantial revision under the guidance of its new director, Brian O'Doherty. The previous director, Chloe Aaron, who left the Endowment for a position with the Public Broadcasting Service, had been in charge of the program since its inception. It is not clear as of this writing exactly what course Media Arts will take in the immediate future. However, it has traditionally maintained three primary areas of interest: 1) funding organizations supporting the study, exhibition and making of film and video; 2) the support of filmmakers as artists, either directly or through the American Film Institute's Independent Filmmaker Program, and, 3) the financing of major films, such as *Bolero*, which use the moving image mediums to popularize other art forms. (*Bolero* is an Academy Award-winning documentary based on the performance of Ravel's composition by a symphony orchestra.)

Other direct filmmaking grants come from state arts councils, the largest of which is the New York State Council on the Arts. Its Creative Artists Public Service Grants have awarded as much as \$20,000 to individual filmmakers.

The National Endowment for the Arts has been one of the primary supporters of independent film activities in the United States. Under its various programs, it has given grants to particularly talented individual filmmakers in amounts up to \$10,000, as well as more substantial funding for specific film projects, to which it has granted up to \$25,000 (to be matched by the recipient) for the production of films under the aegis of state and regional arts agencies (though referred to as Bicentennial, the program has run for a number of years) and the aforementioned *Bolero* under Corporation for Public Broadcasting/National Endowment for the Arts-Joint Programming. The NEA Public Media program began with a \$1 million pilot program in fiscal 1972. Before that date, the NEA

had participated in a number of film, television, or radio projects from 1965 through June 1970.

The Public Media Program awarded \$1.26 million in 1971, \$2 million in 1972, \$2.8 million in 1973, \$4.7 million in 1974, \$5.4 million in 1975, and \$7.6 million in 1976. Of these amounts, about \$6.9 million was given to the AFI directly, and another \$3.2 million went to AFI grant programs for support of independent filmmaking and archival work. Of the total of \$23.76 million distributed by the Public Media panels between 1972 and 1976, about 42% has gone to the American Film Institute.

In fiscal year 1976, Public Media gave \$3.4 million for programming in the arts: \$500,210 for regional development; \$189,776 for media studies; \$762,471 for general programs; \$199,660 for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting/NEA-Joint Fund; \$1,290,000 for the American Film Institute, \$522,809 for the AFI archival contract (through which four institutions receive support); \$386,430 to the AFI Independent Filmmaker Program (which made \$298,826 in grants to filmmakers in 1976); \$222,500 for the American Film Series for TV; \$55,500 for Post-graduate Fellowships; and \$110,000 for CATV (cable television) Internships.

Between 1968 and 1976, the American Film Institute Independent Filmmaker Program awarded 191 grants, selected from 5,351 applicants, for a total of \$1.4 million. The average grant during the period was \$7,393. There are no requirements that a filmmaker must fulfill; the AFI accepts all lengths, formats, gauges, and subject matter. Complete artistic control is retained by the filmmaker. Of the 191 grants awarded, 67 were for narrative films; 51 for documentary films; 26 for avant-garde films; 24 for animated films; six each for animated/experimental or experimental documentary films; two for educational films; two for dramatic/documentaries; five for various combinations of the above categories, and one for a documentary videotape. Project budgets have varied from between \$515 and \$15,000, though the maximum grant is \$10,000.

When seeking a subject grant a filmmaker will select a foundation that would be interested in the subject, and then attempt to convince it to support a film. In such cases, the "making of the film" is secondary to transferring information.

The process is as follows: A filmmaker decides that he or she wishes to make a film on a specific topic. For the sake of example let us say that the subject of the film is to be the changing role of men in American society, will be 25 minutes long, and let us say that the filmmaker has a half-dozen reasonably well-made films to his or her credit.

The first funding recourse for the filmmaker might be the National Endowment Media Arts, which could fund either directly or through the AFI. The decision on funding would be made primarily on the quality of the filmmaker's previous work, and secondarily on the subject. However, the NEA and AFI will not fund the same project.

The remaining sources would be primarily foundations or institutions interested in the subject of the film. These would include foundations which were taking a special interest in men's roles. Or if the filmmaker reworked the project, he or she might appeal to foundations interested in the humanities or broader social issues. An application might be made to any of several government organizations, including the NEA, on the basis of the subject matter rather than on the filmmaker's previous work.

The NEA media panel has given subject grants of up to \$50,000 for specific films. These grants, called programming grants, are meant primarily to support projects about the arts for national broadcast, such as the previously mentioned *Bolero*. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) makes substantial grants, often well over \$100,000, for films on humanistic topics. In all of these cases, the funding decision would be based primarily on the subject of the film, after which the filmmaker would have to prove to the funding organization that he or she has sufficient competence as a filmmaker to complete the film to the satisfaction of the sponsors.

### Non-Government Funding

If neither of these two approaches provides the necessary funding, other sources exist. The filmmaker can finance the film out of his or her own pocket, or through loans from friends and family, and hope to recoup the investment through distribution. A great many independent films are made through this extremely risky approach.

Other sources of income include corporate sponsorship, which is rare for a filmmaker-initiated project and even rarer for a controversial film, and public television stations or distributor sponsorships, which do not usually put money into a film before it is finished. Perhaps it is the occasional unprecedented arrangement that keeps independent filmmakers going. They hope that they will eventually find a means of producing films that no one else has discovered. Such arrangements are very rare.

To understand how private foundations fund independent filmmakers it is necessary to look at some basic facts about them. Private foundations function as the applied social conscience of the American

free-enterprise system. Created as family-style institutions, most foundations dispense relatively small sums to the nonprofit institutions in their area which meet their standards for charitable contributions.

A few large foundations — Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie, for example — make major grants to national and international organizations trying to cope with the critical dilemmas of our age, and are particularly important in fostering experimentation and innovation in the arts and sciences.

The big foundations, as well as the smaller ones, have a decided preference for granting funds to established, reputable institutions that are officially certified as nonprofit and tax-exempt. Provisions of the Internal Revenue Code require that foundation grants must be charitable, educational, or scientific, and must be made to organizations legally designated as nonprofit and therefore eligible to receive them. Foundations can still make modest grants to individuals and contract for professional services up to a reasonable level. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 has made it risky, however, for a foundation to make a sizeable grant to a newly formed group, and there is an absence of well accepted institutions to act as funding recipients for filmmakers.

Most foundations limit their grants to projects they believe will have social value. Unlike the NEA and the AFI, foundations rarely fund films merely to fulfill a filmmaker's needs and aspirations, unless they have defined this as their mission. Some foundations give grants of under \$10,000 to individuals, but large foundations frown on the practice because such grants are difficult to administer.

The Foundation Center located in New York City has an index of foundation grants. A tabulation of film grants for 1972 and 1973 reveals that foundations awarded a total of \$3,723,307 to 78 different recipients. Few grants were given to individuals; most went to organizations.

Independent filmmakers wonder why film does not receive more from foundations when large sums are being provided for ballet, dance, the nation's symphony orchestras, and regional theaters. Why are there not more grants for films as a new and important form of art? The answer to this question is complex: film is a twentieth-century medium that has only recently gained acceptance as an art form, does not have support systems to receive and administer grants or vociferous supporters in high places to demand a share of the funds available. As a result, film grants are far more risky to a foundation's credibility or the position of a foundation officer. It is far easier to defend support of the more traditional art forms.

Unfortunately, most foundations do not appear to have any guidelines for dealing with film. Many are not even structured so that they can

check out proposals. They do not know who is qualified to do films, and they know little about film budgets and what the process of making a film entails.

One foundation that does recognize film as an art and bestows its largesse on filmmakers is the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, which provides fellowships "to add to the educational, literary, artistic, and scientific power of the country." The first Guggenheim grant to a filmmaker was awarded to Maya Deren in 1946. In 1974, the Guggenheim fellowships averaged \$12,000 each, though they can go as high as \$18,000.

In 1964, as part of an experimental film program, the Ford Foundation made grants totalling \$118,500 to 12 filmmakers, including Hilary Harris, Stan VanDerBeek, Jordan Belson, James Blue, Bruce Connor, Kent MacKenzie, Carmen D'Avino, and Kenneth Anger. The program was not continued.

Another foundation, the Jerome Foundation (located in St. Paul and formerly known as the Avon Foundation) has given substantial and unusually imaginative support to filmmakers. Jerome Hill, the heir to the Avon fortune, was an active filmmaker and well known supporter of the Anthology Film Archives. On his death in 1972, the name of the foundation was changed. Avon provided support for the Friends of New Cinema, a program administered by Jonas Mekas, which each year gave 12 filmmakers monthly stipends of \$40 to \$60. Many of the leading figures of avantgarde film were supported by this program. The same foundation provided substantial funding for the establishing of the Anthology Film Archives in 1970, and has contributed to other programs devoted to the exhibition of independent film, including the Whitney Museum's New American Filmmaker series, the Film Forum and the Collective for Living Cinema.

## Nontheatrical Exhibition

Nontheatrical exhibition of film is now a primary, if not the primary, factor in the diet of the sophisticated film goer. It is at the museum, college, or library program that the interested viewer can be sure of seeing a film which has been chosen because of its special merit.

Various forms of nontheatrical exhibition have grown steadily since the Second World War. Few of these programs limit themselves to independent film. Most show a wide range of programs, but if an independent film is shown publicly, it is most likely to be at one of these organizations. Before discussing in more detail the different kinds of nontheatrical exhibition available to independent filmmakers, we should look at some of the things they all have in common:

### 1. The importance of programming.

All forms of independent exhibition rely on the film programmer to select material for screening. The programmer is free to choose from a huge body of American, foreign, and independent film, and unlike the commercial film buyer, the independent programmer relies primarily on his own subjective judgment and taste.

A programmer bases his selection of films on coherent aesthetic or thematic principles. A good film programmer is expected to have exceptional taste in film, an extensive knowledge of the history of film, and the ability to locate good prints of rare films. The success of any nontheatrical program is based on the ability of a single individual to select interesting films from the vast body of work available.

### 2. The hall.

Nontheatrical programs are rarely shown in commercial movie theaters. At their best, nontheatrical halls can far exceed the standards of commercial movie theaters in terms of screen brightness, image

quality, and sound reproduction. Most good nontheatrical halls are equipped for both 16-mm and 35-mm films. A few are also capable of screening 8-mm and video. At worst, such halls are lunchrooms, library reading rooms, or church meeting rooms with portable screens and no projection booths. In some cases, conditions are marginal at best.

However, being freed from the conflicting needs of commercial theaters in which quality of presentation is usually second to economical operation, it is the nature of nontheatrical exhibitors to strive to attain the best possible viewing conditions. Since the programmer devotes great effort to the selection of films, he will also want to have those films shown to their best advantage. But it is also the nature of nontheatrical exhibitors to show films in whatever space is available.

### 3. The audience.

Depending on a loyal audience which attends regularly, non-commercial theaters do little advertising. Publicity is done through the mail, usually by sending schedules of a month or more of screenings to program members. Word-of-mouth is then relied upon to bring in the audience.

As no reliable surveys have been made of the independent film audience, it is difficult to estimate its total size. However, there are some generally held assumptions. The audience is composed primarily of individuals who have an interest in seeing films for more than entertainment purposes. They are generally better informed about the history of films, read film books, and may have had some formal film education. They tend to be a loyal audience, often following a program regularly, and are likely to purchase a "membership" so as to receive program schedules in advance.

Because film audiences tend to be loyal, most nontheatrical programs rely on a base audience which receives regular notice of programs through the mail. Depending on the size of the theater and the number of screenings a year, once a specific base audience is reached, regular attendance can be expected. Promotion, usually through newspaper articles and limited advertising, is primarily geared toward maintaining this audience. The amount of publicity a theater does depends upon how transient its basic audience is. The higher the turnover, the more advertising and publicity will be needed to sustain a base audience. Some long-established programs do nothing more than quarterly mailings to maintain attendance.

It is generally believed that the nontheatrical audience is older in years than the general film audience. This judgment is based on Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) figures which indicate that a majority of the commercial film audience is between 16 and 24 years



of age. Individuals in this age group tend to compose a smaller percentage of the nontheatrical film audience, which appears to be made up primarily of individuals in their late twenties through the thirties, though it is difficult to be accurate on the upper limit.

These estimates raise several unanswered questions. Is the nontheatrical film audience merely film goers who have grown up and want a richer film experience, or is it an audience which has been abandoned by commercial theater owners as unprofitable? According to MPAA estimates, in 1972, the total movie going audience was about 18 million people per week, compared to 80 million per week in 1946. During those 26 years the total population of the United States has grown by over 60 million. Are the two audiences analogous to the music audience, which can be divided into those who prefer the classic repertory and those interested in popular music? Does the nontheatrical film goer also follow commercial films?

Perhaps the most interesting speculation is if in the future, when there will be more Americans in the 25 to 40 age group than at present, and the 16 to 24 age bracket will have declined in terms of percentage of total population (accompanied by a growth in visual sophistication of the now maturing generations) will the audiences of noncommercial exhibitors increase? And, if that happens, will the theatrical exhibitors skim this audience's most lucrative members, as happened with the foreign film audience of the 1960s? Perhaps a more likely scenario would have the nontheatrical audience continue to grow for the above reasons, while the financial interests behind theatrical exhibition adopt one of the emerging forms of exhibition, such as the video disc, as their marketing device.

### **Forms of Nontheatrical Exhibition**

Four distinct forms of exhibition account for almost all public film screenings outside of commercial movie theaters: museum programs, film societies, libraries and nonprofit theaters. Television does not show much independent film at present, but its future as a showcase is receiving much attention by filmmakers.

#### Museum Programs

Film has had a place in museums since the Museum of Modern Art Film Department was established in 1935 by Iris Barry. However, it was not until the 1960s that film became an established fixture at most major museums. This is not to say that film is given equal status with the more traditional art forms. For a variety of reasons (including internal museum politics, the lack of academically qualified film curators, the lack of adequate screening facilities in older museums, and

the fact that film does not have the investment quality of traditional art) film is often treated as a poor cousin to the traditional art forms. However, it has become rare for an art museum not to have some sort of film program.

The program at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), the oldest and perhaps the most prestigious museum film program in the United States, shows films six days a week in a recently renovated 470-seat auditorium. Besides simply screening films, the museum has a study center, major archive, a text and clipping library, a distribution service, various lecture series, and supports a variety of research projects. The department staff includes a director, an assistant director, two curators, and 24 other staff members. The museum showed approximately 500 features and 300 short films in its most recent year.

One of the greatest strengths of the MOMA program is its diversity. It will show any form of film, whether it be feature, documentary, avantgarde, or animation. And it has the financial resources to send members of the staff on tours to discover new work. It is the "essential" museum program, preserving classic work and seeking out new artists. The MOMA staff has made discoveries from all periods in the history of film, from long-lost silent features to contemporary third-world films unseen in the United States.

Located at the University Art Museum in Berkeley, the Pacific Film Archives is another ambitious museum-based program. Established in 1967 by Sheldon Renan, the Archive offers seven days of programming each week, averaging 75 programs per month in its 199-seat hall. As with many good museum programs, Pacific has projection facilities of the highest quality: its 16-mm and 35-mm equipment are both far better than can be found in any but the most exceptional commercial theaters. In addition, the Archive will periodically run programs in other halls, at times having as many as four screenings running simultaneously in halls far larger than its home theater.

In addition to the film program itself, Pacific offers study facilities to the State University in Berkeley, a small film archive, and a film information service.

Other major museum film programs include the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, the Whitney (which shows only American independent film), the Los Angeles County Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh and many others.

Programs similar to the MOMA and the Pacific Film Archives, though smaller in scope, exist throughout the United States. In fiscal 1976, 21 grants for independent film screening programs were recommended for funding by the NEA Public Media Panel. Included were

exhibition programs at the Indianapolis Museum of Art; the International Cinema Program in Fairbanks, Alaska; the Los Angeles International Film Exposition; Media Study, Inc., in Buffalo, N. Y.; the Portland Art Association/Northwest Film Study Center; the Rocky Mountain Film Center in Boulder, Colo.; the San Francisco Museum of Art; Pittsburgh Film-Makers, Inc.; and the University Film Study Center in Cambridge, Ma.

### Film Societies

Programs at college film societies are often composed primarily of commercial feature films and do not include a large percentage of independent film. But there are a great many film societies with constantly changing tastes, often more than one on a campus, and they clearly qualify as a major market for independent films. The Land Report estimates that the college campuses, outside of the classroom, utilize from \$6 million to \$10 million worth of film each year. The report also estimates that over 9,000 colleges have film theaters of which 200 are equipped with 35-mm projection equipment.

Film societies grew in the post-war period partly because of the influence of the returning GI's and partly from the growing general interest in European films. Along with the art houses of the period, film societies provided the only access to films beyond the generally low-level material Hollywood was producing during the 1950s and early 1960s.

Film societies vary substantially in size and nature. Some, like the programs at Dartmouth and Cornell, are major exhibitors offering varied, carefully selected programs in well-designed halls. The Dartmouth program uses a 880-seat hall equipped with 16-mm and 35-mm projectors. It shows films two nights a week and has an annual attendance of over 40,000 for the approximately 80 to 100 features and 50 shorts shown each year.

It is difficult to quantify or accurately describe university film societies. They vary tremendously from campus to campus and can change drastically as student directors graduate and new staff takes over. Campus film tastes are generally far more adventurous than that of the general public and the film societies can therefore be somewhat flexible in their programming. In the early 1960s they were one of the only places where one could see foreign films. Many campuses have more than one program, ranging from quasi-commercial operations showing feature films in huge halls, to departmental programs, such as the Conference on Visual Anthropology at Temple.

### Independent Theaters and Art Houses

While the number of film societies and museum film programs seems to have followed a fairly steady growth pattern, independently owned and operated theaters have had a more cyclical history. What makes art houses different from the standard theater is that they have a more flexible programming policy, which is usually dominated by one individual's taste. The theaters show those films that are not shown by the major theater chains. They exist in the area between museums and film societies, which can program with some freedom from the need to fill the house every night, and commercial theaters, which will program anything so long as it fills the house. Art houses continue to exist because there is a segment of the filmgoing population that is not satisfied by commercial programming. The further out of phase the major commercial theater chains are with the taste of this audience, the more likely there will be numerous and prosperous art houses.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the 600 or so art houses programmed primarily foreign films, and some programs of classic American films. They showed films such as *Bicycle Thief* and *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* which were starkly different than the "beach party" films that dominated the more commercial screens. By the end of the 1960s, by which time many of the major European directors had established themselves in the first-run theaters in the United States, the energy of the European New Wave began to dissipate, and the supply of films available to the independent operator decreased. The absence of new foreign films began to drive the art theaters out of business.

### Libraries

Libraries have become a significant factor in the nontheatrical film market. Much of the federal support for education has gone to supply libraries with equipment for film and video use as well as for films and tapes. The Higher Education Act, Title II, provided over \$24 million between 1969 and 1972 for college libraries to acquire materials, and under Title VIA, \$5.5 million for instructional equipment. The Libraries, Archives and Construction Act of 1964 provided an additional \$4 million between 1969 and 1972.

The Land Report estimates that about 1,200 libraries are buying films, about 250 have acquisition budgets over \$10,000, and a few have annual acquisition budgets over \$50,000. The largest of these libraries contain over 10,000 prints, while the average contain about 1,200.

Libraries have developed into major exhibition centers. In one active program of the 50 district libraries of Nassau County, Long Island,

program attendance has reached as high as 500,000 during a single year.

The Donnell Library in New York has a large and active collection which is the central program for the New York City Public Library. Established in January of 1958, the film program at Donnell provides films for the informal educational needs of the community but, like many library film programs, serves neither classrooms nor assemblies nor collects curriculum-oriented films.

The annual acquisition budget at Donnell is about \$75,000. Depending on the vagaries of city finances, that amount can rise to as much as \$120,000 in an extraordinary year. The library collection currently contains some 22,000 titles and about 35,000 prints. All the films in the Donnell collection are in 16 mm.

In addition to lending films, the Donnell Library has a variety of screenings in its own theater and at branch libraries. Branch libraries screen about 400 films a month, which is about half the number they showed before major cutbacks in library service two years ago. The Donnell offers a number of programs itself, including a "What's Happening" series conducted in conjunction with the Museum of Modern Art, a series based on recent library acquisitions, a children's series, a series for older people, and a "Meet the Maker" series, which features the filmmakers along with the films. Attendance at the Donnell itself averages about 1,000 per week, and for the whole library system about 6,000 per week.

Programs similar to the Donnell's exist throughout the country. Some such as those in Rochester, New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore and other cities are as large if not larger than the Donnell program.

### The American Film Institute

Quite unlike any other is the American Film Institute exhibition program which was founded in 1970 and which has resided at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts since 1973. It is the only program in the United States regularly showing independent films out of a major metropolitan performing arts center. Lincoln Center and other such arts complexes have film programs, such as the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center, but such programs only run for short periods once or twice a year. The AFI program is excellent, showing a wide variety of films ranging from classic features to recent independent films. However, independent films constitute a very small percentage of the total films shown.

The 1970s have seen the marked growth of a number of screening programs devoted totally to independent film. Some of these, such as

the Anthology Film Archives and the Film Forum in New York, are self-contained programs, while others are associated with other organizations. The NAME Gallery in Chicago, the Albright Knox in Buffalo, and the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis are all attached to galleries or museums. Some, such as Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the Boston Film and Video Foundation, the Millenium in New York, the Oasis in Los Angeles, and the Canyon Cinematheque in San Francisco, are all run by organizations of filmmakers. The list of such organizations is quite long.

*The Film and Video Makers Travel Sheet*, published monthly by the Film Section of the Museum of Art of the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, recently listed 74 institutions interested in booking independent filmmakers to show and discuss their work.<sup>7</sup> That same *Travel Sheet* published in February 1977 listed over 107 film and video artists planning tours during the following months.

Some of these showcases are quite venerable, such as the Millenium in New York and the Canyon Cinematheque in San Francisco, both of which have been in continuous operation for well over a decade. Others, such as the Collective for Living Cinema in New York and Center Screen in Boston, are only a few years old.

Much of the support for these programs comes from the National Endowment for the Arts. During the fiscal year 1976, twenty-two organizations in 16 states received support from the NEA for the public screening of independent film.

### Television<sup>8</sup>

Many independent filmmakers make an effort to sell their work to television, but very little independent film is used on either the commercial or public stations. Because so many people watch television, and because television plays an important role in forming public opinion, the conventions surrounding television are hard to penetrate. The Federal Communications Commission holds broadcast licensees responsible for program content. Television news is controlled by the Fairness Doctrine, an FCC mandate, which requires that the various sides of controversial questions be treated fairly. A violation of the regulations theoretically could lead to loss of a station's license. As a consequence, broadcast management insists that it must determine the editorial direction and content of the programs it airs.

What this means is that the individual filmmaker's work must meet

<sup>7</sup>*The Film and Video Makers Travel Sheet*, April 1977, published by the Film Section, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213.

<sup>8</sup>Much of the following material on television is excerpted from the Land Report.

the editorial needs and standards of the station or network. The price of working within the television system is a loss of that condition of professional existence valued most — independence.

Also acting as a deterrent to independent entry into both commercial and public TV is the networks' vested interests in maintaining the operational vitality and viability of existing filmmaking units on their own staffs. This is particularly true in the case of commercial TV.

American commercial television is part of the entertainment industry of the United States. Fueled by advertising rather than by box-office revenue, it is engaged in a ceaseless competition for audience and income.

It was perhaps inevitable that major film studios (Universal, Columbia, Warner Brothers, and Paramount) that meant "Hollywood" in the decades of that medium's existence, became the dominant forces in nighttime television. In the 1973/1974 season, these companies alone represented more than half of the prime-time programming carried by three commercial networks. The three major networks themselves as well as a few additional Hollywood production companies account for the rest of the entire nighttime program schedule.

### TV News

The National Broadcasting Company's News Division produces some 30 documentaries each year, each averaging about \$200,000 in cost. The NBC documentary unit consists of about 30 producers, researchers, directors, and cameramen. The Network News Division does not try to avoid controversy, but demands the right to produce such material itself. The facts must be checked and double-checked. And the network is responsible for the content of each film.

On occasion, as with other networks, NBC buys outside material. If the film is very special, the News Division will make an exception. Moreover, outside producers can submit ideas to the program department which does not concern itself with public affairs. This kind of material does not touch on the NBC News Department's pre-emptive right.

The documentary unit at the Columbia Broadcasting System employs 21 top-level production executives plus another 30 to 40 lower-echelon personnel — researchers, cameramen, assistant directors, and so forth. In 1973, the CBS unit's budget was approximately \$2,187,500.

In addition to covering public affairs, network documentaries venture into the educational, cultural, adventure, and even semi-entertainment areas. They are sold directly to the network program departments. On a rare occasion, the CBS news department will accept a unique idea proposed by an outsider.

Programs concerning matters of current affairs and controversy, those concerning social, economic, and political issues, must be produced by CBS units. No ideas or completed films by outsiders which deal with these broad areas are acceptable.

The American Broadcasting Company created a documentary unit in 1973. The unit has a budget of about \$3,000,000 for various film projects, exclusive of departmental salaries.

### Potential of Public Television

One would expect that the opportunities for the independent filmmaker would lie in another direction — Public Television (PTV). And there are a number of independent documentarians for whom public television has been a major vehicle: Fred Wiseman, Craig Gilbert, Jack Willis, and Mort Silverstein are a few.

PTV, however, is perennially short of funds, and a first-rate documentary costs at least \$100,000 to produce. Political pressures within the PTV system have led to an emphasis on local issues, combined with a discouragement of controversial programming. It is more difficult than in the past for the controversial documentary to reach a national audience — and to be funded. The system is hospitable, however, to the “soft” documentary which deals with politically inoffensive subject matter.

A public television station succeeds to the degree that it becomes part of the community. It must provide services to the local community and must win the community's support, financial and otherwise. Though the government, through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and through state agencies, provides a significant measure of support, a substantial amount of station funding comes directly from viewer subscriptions and each station has its own board of trustees, many of the members of which are established figures in the community. These members become another source of support, but also they scrutinize what is telecast. Thus, as the years have passed, public television stations have become institutionalized.

It has been observed that many public stations, particularly those in smaller communities, are increasingly loath to adopt positions that alienate viewers. The creative freedom of filmmakers very often results in their making films which the public channels find entirely unacceptable for their audiences.

As public television has begun to compete more aggressively for an audience, additional emphasis has been placed on the orderly flow of programming. As a result, PTV has adopted the series format for



much of its programming and it has become increasingly difficult to get national broadcast time for scheduling individual, independently produced, films. All TV programming tends to run in half-hour segments, while independent films tend to vary in length, depending on the judgment and the budget of the filmmaker. Each independent film is usually a self-contained unit and it is extremely difficult to develop a format which will permit the broadcast of independent film on a regular basis.

PTV stations also share the burden of responsibility for what is broadcast over their licensed airwaves, and many PTV stations have production crews on staff which need a constant flow of station-produced programming.

Public television stations are chronically short of programming funds. Yet the filmmaker expects to earn substantial sums from his work when public television presents it. But a filmmaker is fortunate if a local public station is willing to pay anything for the use of a film. National PTV broadcast rarely pays more than \$200 per minute of film.

Since the public television stations remain in great need of programming material, and since the independent filmmaker has the skill to supply such material, there would seem to be a good basis for them to work together. All the difficulties notwithstanding, there do appear to be major prospects in the public television sector for the independent filmmaker. To begin with, public television management is far more sympathetic to the independent than commercial management. The precedents are impressive. Various stations have attempted to work with independent filmmakers in their own areas. Moreover, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Public Broadcasting Service have a positive interest in developing independent ideas.

The fundamental problems in the broadcasting of the work of independent filmmakers on television, on both the public and the private stations, lie not with the intentions and the sympathies of the individuals involved, but with the inherent pressures within the medium. Including PTV, there are only four national television networks. Many areas of the country are not served by independent stations, and many areas do not even receive all four networks. The private stations are under immense pressure to maintain their legendary profitability and the public stations are under similar pressure to maintain their position within the constantly shifting community of government, foundation, corporate and subscription supporters.

Considering the parameters of a system in which a program which draws ten million satisfied viewers can be adjudged an unquestioned failure; in which offending only a small but vocal portion of the audience can cause great difficulty; in which management is respon-

sible for supporting staff production units, and in which successfully following the traditional course can produce either wealth or power, or both, it should be to no one's surprise that the iconoclastic independent has not been able to find more than occasional participation.

### Television's Future

The great promise of television is in its potential to provide almost unlimited programming choices to the viewer. Whether the programming arrives packaged on a disc or in a cassette, or is transmitted over cables or by satellite, it is not difficult to envision a situation in which the viewer has almost unlimited choice. The audience of the future can be composed of individuals each making his or her own programming selections from a vast body of available material.

(It should be noted at this point that some filmmakers have no interest in having their work shown on a small screen and some viewers will always seek the shared experience of watching films in a large auditorium. It is not implied in the following that looking at a film on television is the same as looking at a film in a theater.)

The ability to sell films directly to the viewer has the potential of reducing the pressures of a mass audience. Profitability may be increased to the point where the sale of a program hour to 100,000 viewers will be sufficient to support production. The primary questions are: how small can an audience be and still support a producer, and will the development of electronic image recording devices, such as video disc, have a history parallel to that of recorded music? The fear of the independent producer is that the giants of the entertainment industry will continue to monopolize delivery systems.

Potentially, such delivery systems should make it possible for the moving image media to provide the consumer with the same diversity as is provided by the recording industry. The technological breakthrough of long-playing records opened a substantially enlarged market for recorded music (and eventually greatly expanded the art form through the development of electrified instruments more suited to recording than to live performance). Fears that recorded music would eliminate live performance have proven unfounded, as is witnessed by the growth of symphony orchestras over the past fifteen years, and the continued profitability of live performances by popular recording artists. It would be hoped that similar advances in the moving image medium would encourage similar expansion.

Talk of the video disc and other home playback systems has been heard for years. The imminent marketing of such systems has been regularly heralded by the large corporations involved (RCA and

Phillips/MCA, among others) but only one, Sony, has actually begun the process. It can also be assumed that a period of time will pass after the initial marketing of a number of systems for the sorting out of problems of compatibility and programming before the independent producer can satisfactorily enter the market.

It is reasonable to assume that early programming will draw primarily on existing materials, particularly feature film libraries, and utilize the skills of existing producing companies. To satisfactorily market playback systems, programming materials must be available from the start, before it would be profitable for the independent producer to enter the marketplace.

In an address to a video disc programming conference in November of 1976 in New York City, Gunnar Bergvahl, a Swedish economist and President of Bonniers Leisure Group, Stockholm, projected that 1.5 million playback systems would have to be in homes of a single language market before a sufficient audience to support production would exist. Basing his figures on the early growth of television and high-fidelity equipment, Bergvahl estimated that it would take from three to five years after the initial introduction of hardware for this market to develop in the United States and other English speaking countries. The calculations are based on the estimate that, as is the case with record sales, a 3% to 10% market share will constitute a "hit."

Other systems hold a more immediate promise to the independent filmmaker. Cable television (CATV) obviously does not require the consumer to invest in hardware and has the potential of providing a substantial increase in available programming. But CATV has not yet been generally accepted and faces a number of challenges before it can acquire the type of programming (primarily sports and feature films) which would encourage the potential users to bring the system into their homes.

Which system will survive, how long it will take for a single system to become dominant, and how long a system will last before it is replaced by more sophisticated technology are strictly questions for conjecture. But one thing is clear. Increased accessibility to programming holds the promise of substantially altering the communications industry in the favor of the independent producer.



## Preservation

If we are viewing film as more than a mass entertainment medium, but also as an art form, a documentation of our history and as a means of education, the question of preservation becomes of primary importance. All forms of film, theatrical and nontheatrical, form a very special American legacy. Films provide an unusually vivid record of our history and of our culture, and the work of previous generations is necessary to educate filmmakers in the future. It would be a sterile medium if filmmakers could not study the work of the early silent masters, Griffith and Eisenstein, or the documentary films of Robert Flaherty, or the early avantgarde films of Léger and Man Ray.

Unfortunately, a large part of our film heritage is already lost. More than half of the motion pictures produced in the United States since the turn of the century have disappeared, and the same is believed to be true for the early products of television. But there still is hope for the materials that have survived and continue to be produced.

### Technical Considerations

Until 1951, cellulose nitrate was used to form the transparent base for all 35-mm film. Cellulose nitrate is unstable chemically, and in its decayed state is a close cousin to gunpowder. It has a low flash point, contains its own oxidant, and once ignited cannot be extinguished.

In addition to this tendency to burn, nitrate-based film decays over a period of time. In his study entitled *Preserving the Moving Image*, Ralph Sargent states: "no way has yet been found to prevent the self-destructive process to which every foot of nitrate film will eventually succumb — but there is no mistaking the end. The film's surface becomes sticky; the emulsion separates from the base; the image is

soon beyond recall; the celluloid itself turns into a coagulate, and finally into brown powder.”<sup>9</sup>

In countries that have only a small national production, one national archive appears to be sufficient to cope with the tasks of preserving it. In the United States, which is one of the largest and most important producers of film in the world, there are several institutions actively dedicated to film preservation. At the present time they are chiefly preserving nitrate films. The institutions most involved are: The American Film Institute (their collection is in the Library of Congress); the Motion Picture Section of the Library of Congress; the Department of Film of the Museum of Modern Art; the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House; the National Archives; and the Department of Motion Pictures at the University of California at Los Angeles. There is a regular exchange of information among these institutions which avoids duplication of effort, decides priorities among films to be preserved and helps keep the quality of the preserved copies high.

Approximately a dozen other institutions, including television archives, paper archives with audio-visual materials, and special subject archives, are also involved to a greater or lesser degree in the work of preservation. There are many other collections now in public and private hands, including the producers', which contain original materials in need of preservation.

It has been estimated that there remains millions of dollars in laboratory work to be completed to save just the remaining existing nitrate film. The size of the task of saving color films may be even larger. The amount of videotape increases at a staggering rate each day; furthermore one cannot even estimate the costs that would be involved to preserve it. At present there are no satisfactory, relatively inexpensive processes for the preservation of color film and videotape.

The collecting of films began in 1894, with the submission of paper positive copies for copyright registration to the Library of Congress. Between 1894 and 1912, film was copyrighted in the same way as photographic images. Films were converted to roles of paper on which the film image was contact-printed. After 1912, a change in the copyright laws made the deposit of a description of the film sufficient to register a copyright.

Between 1912 and 1947, virtually no film was collected by the Library. In the late 1940s the Library began to systematically select

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<sup>9</sup>*Preserving the Moving Image*, Ralph N. Sargent. Published jointly by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1974.

prints of current releases for its collection. As a result, there is no film record in the Library of Congress of the films made during the 1920s when the development of the silent film in America was at its peak.

The problems of preserving independent film are even greater. There has never been a systematic system for the collection of the work of independent filmmakers. The films collected by the Library of Congress are deposited with the Library at the producer's cost as part of the copyright procedures. Many independent filmmakers do not fully copyright their work to avoid the cost of depositing a print. Original material is usually left with the film processing laboratory. The almost universal use of color film means that unless a print is stored under optimum conditions, the colors will begin to fade in less than 20 years.

Avantgarde filmmakers present a particular problem. Many cannot even afford the cost of making an internegative from which to strike projection prints and print directly from the camera original. After a few prints are made, the original material begins to show signs of wear. Eventually, it will not produce a satisfactory print. Stan Brakhage, who is a particularly prolific filmmaker and perhaps the leading figure in postwar avantgarde film, may be no more than a name to the next generation of filmmakers. The process of cataloguing and preserving his work (most of which is stored in his home) is far beyond his financial means.

Generally, avantgarde filmmakers need to be educated about the realities of preservation. Most laboratories do not preserve printing materials under proper conditions of temperature and humidity, nor can individuals realistically expect to preserve their own work. The financial burden and necessity for periodic inspections, for instance, are major tasks that can be more effectively and efficiently carried out by an operating archive.

Anthology Film Archives in New York has made some inroads in this area of preserving independent and avantgarde film. Other archives have begun to take greater interest in this material, but enormous work remains to be done — especially for living filmmakers active in the last two decades. Considering the rapidity with which trends in the art world develop and pass on, it is particularly important that the product of this exceptionally productive period be saved for future generations.

## History

The first actual film archive in this country came with the founding of the Department of Film at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935. In the 1940s, the Library of Congress gradually began to resume the task of creating a national collection and has increased the amount of materials collected each year. Now the Library of Congress is the largest motion

picture archive in the country. In 1948, the George Eastman House began a film collection which soon grew to become as important as the earlier two.

The major production companies had no real interest in the preservation of their productions until the sale of films to television began in the 1960s, though even at that late date they acted without sufficient consideration for archival standards.

Countless nitrate films have been lost over the years. Many nitrate duplicate negatives were made by early film producers, but after several generations of duplication, the quality of the original image virtually disappears. In addition, questions of quality become more complicated because of the differences in methods used to process nitrate prints. Prints which were carefully processed when they were originally made — which usually means that the hypo was thoroughly removed and they were stored under good temperature/humidity conditions — remain in good condition after seventy years. Prints made and stored under less favorable conditions may deteriorate in less than a third of that time.

Triacetate film stock now in use is *supposed* to last for as long as the finest paper — approximately 400 years. This stock does not require the exacting storage conditions demanded by nitrate or by color prints. Unfortunately, triacetate stock only became generally available in the 1950s. The nitrate films transferred to this preservation stock had, in many cases, already experienced serious and irreversible deterioration.

Small-scale efforts to transfer nitrate to acetate were continuous in the archives since their founding, but it was a losing battle until the National Endowment for the Arts entered the picture in 1972. Through NEA grants administered by the American Film Institute, the major archives made a great leap forward in the amount of preservation work they could accomplish each year. A much greater effort is necessary, however, if the remaining nitrate film is to be saved, and if we are to try to save color films and television material as well.

The moving image has at least begun to be recognized at the national level as a vital part of our cultural heritage. It is too late to save some of our national production, but much still can be saved for future generations to examine, if all the national, regional, and private funding agencies, and the general public will take some responsibility for the task.

Duplication on acetate stock is at present the accepted means of preserving black and white nitrate films. However, there is a possibility that technological research may yet find a means of preserving the original film image itself, a more desirable goal, since a certain amount of quality is always lost in duplicating.



Color films have been collected by the archives ever since they began to be made, and now almost all modern films are in color. Color films, no matter what their base, deteriorate rapidly unless stored under optimum conditions. The color quality of some recent films, such as the Japanese *Gate of Hell* (1953) considered remarkable in its time, has deteriorated beyond recognition. The same fate awaits many other color films, including those being produced today.

A truly effective and practical means of preserving color is not yet known, and the method now in use — making color separation negatives — is so expensive and space-consuming as to be little used at present in any archive. The making of separation negatives is basically the old technicolor process through which an image is reduced through the use of filters to its three primary colors and stored on three separate black and white prints. When making a projection print, the process is reversed, combining the information on the three separate films through the use of color filters to produce a full-color print.

Television material has been collected and preserved in the non-commercial institutions only on a “catch as catch can” basis: through copyright deposit at the Library of Congress; award submission to the Peabody and Emmy organizations; efforts of a few university and historical society collections; and the Vanderbilt Archives (since 1968 collecting network evening news broadcasts). Very few of the copies in these collections could be considered archival. Most broadcasts are kept on color film or narrow-gauge helical-scan videotape, and neither form has the stability of black and white film for permanent archival preservation. As in the case of color film, it is necessary to carry out technological research into how these materials can best be stored and preserved.

The need for archival quality of sound-with-image presents additional technological problems. The best techniques for copying the image will not necessarily preserve the quality of the sound, which is liable to distortion, extraneous noise, and so forth. Ideally, the sound should be recorded on a separate track, but this process adds greatly to the cost of preservation, and few archives can afford to do it consistently. Cheaper but high quality means are needed.

The recommendations made in the Sargent report are: the construction of new film storage vaults in which the most stringent of standards can be kept; substantial research aimed at developing both new ways of storing a film image under less extreme conditions and new methods of restoring deteriorated materials; the use of color separations to store selected color films until a more economical method can be devised; and financial support for the ultimate development of a relatively permanent storage medium for moving images, both film and video.

Storage in a specific and controlled environment is basic to the preservation of moving image materials, yet no storage facility meeting all of the standards of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) exists in this country. Even less adequate facilities are in short supply. Because it is a first principle of preservation that originals must be retained as well as the duplicate masters, the continuing work of preservation demands increased storage space. Those few archives which have constructed their own vaults have found it necessary to rent additional storage space in commercial storage vaults, which usually lack an environment that meets archival standards. It is believed that many valuable collections currently outside of the major archives may be stored under harmful conditions, partly because the custodians are not even aware of the need for proper storage.

It is now believed that color film stock should be stored at a lower temperature than black and white film (below  $-4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), and the construction of such refrigeration vaults is costly. The archives have to resolve the question of whether to wait for technological research that will find a medium other than film for recording color (a solution that appears on the horizon), or whether such cold-storage vaults must be built in any case, since it may take many years to transfer all color film to a new medium. Even now, color films are fading and disappearing through improper storage.

The number of commercial laboratories able to handle nitrate film at this time is small, since nitrate no longer is in commercial use. Those able to produce master copies that meet archival standards are even fewer and are located chiefly on the East Coast. The Library of Congress and the National Archives are the only film archives in the country having some laboratory facilities of their own. With sufficient advance planning, these facilities might be expanded to help with the laboratory work of the other archives, but the demands of these institutions' collections is such that not too much can be expected in this direction.

### **Role of the Archives**

The major archives have felt the need for at least one noncommercial, highly specialized laboratory, able to handle the duplicating of their nitrate collections. Such a laboratory would have to have a staff of trained specialists and all the equipment to handle the most difficult problems.

The first step in creating such a laboratory would be to undertake a study to determine if the start-up costs and operating expenses would be justified by the amount of nitrate film that would be copied during the next decade or two, and whether it would be feasible to include

color and video preservation in the tasks of such a laboratory.

The original film materials or prints of excellent quality first must be acquired by the archives if they are to be preserved. The problems in doing so are both financial and legal. Except in very rare cases, archives do not own the exploitation rights to the materials they hold. While the materials are part of our national cultural heritage, at the same time, they have been produced by commercial companies for profit.

The activities of the archives should in no way interfere with the right of the producer to realize profit from his endeavor. In fact, the work of preservation should be a help to the producer. Because materials are most often deposited by the original producer under certain legal agreements limiting use of the material, legal problems do not usually occur in these cases. But when a new owner buys the rights from the original producer, or the original depositor goes out of business or dies, or others than the original depositor seek access to the materials in the archives, legal questions can result which require the retention of legal counsel to advise the archives.

Archives lack funds for acquisition and depend very much on donations of material. Revision of current tax laws to facilitate such donations is of great importance.

Research is needed to locate materials and to ascertain the legal rights. It is essential for archives to create trust and understanding of their activities, if the owners of copyrights are to cooperate. The help of all film and television makers, production companies, unions, and guilds is needed if the moving image is to be saved. It is not a problem for archives alone.

If the collected materials are not catalogued, they are of no use to anyone, not even those seeking to preserve them. According to our survey, a union catalog is greatly desired, but before that is possible archives have to complete the catalogs of their own collections. No major archive in the United States has published a full catalog of its holdings.

There is no standardization in film cataloguing. Computer programs for archival cataloguing are coming into existence, but the method of standardization that will suit the needs of different kinds of archives has not yet been found — if, indeed, it is possible to arrive at such standards. The more complete, accurate, and useful the information we record about the films in our archives, the more the moving image will become accessible for study.

Archives have had to work very hard to acquire their collections. It has taken enormous efforts to persuade the owners of copyrights that the materials collected will be protected from improper or illegal use, which might be harmful to the owners of the rights. It has been

necessary to maintain a high degree of responsibility toward archival collections — responsibility both to the goal of preservation of materials and to the legal rights of the owners.

Consequently, most of the major collections have been built on the understanding that the materials will stay in the archive and will be viewed only on archive premises. This works a hardship on those citizens who live far away from the major archives. All of the major archives have concentrated in recent years on making the materials available for private advanced study, through the use of private projection rooms and viewing tables within the institutions. Some of them also serve the surrounding region by holding regular screenings, open to the public, in their own archive cinemas.

Alone among the major archives, The Museum of Modern Art has regarded the circulation of films to other educational institutions as an obligation since the days its collections were first established, at a time when it was almost impossible to see any film that had completed its initial theatrical release. This task was carried out through contracts and agreements with the owners of the rights. Since that time nontheatrical distribution has grown to large proportions and has become a business in its own right. The archives belonging to FIAF have an obligation of membership to make loans and exchanges with some forty archives around the world, providing that the needs of preservation and legal protection for the rights of owners are respected.

There is yet a need to make archival material more widely available to the American public. Those films most in demand will be sought out by the nontheatrical distributors and made available through their channels. But there remain those materials so special in interest that the nontheatrical distributors do not find it economically feasible to buy rights, make negatives and prints, provide subtitles, and expend funds on promotion. There are a growing number of regional facilities able and eager to show these special materials. However, archives with only one projection print, even though it is protected by master preservation copies, cannot afford to see that print worn out through repeated projections. Even if all regional centers had good quality projection facilities, a print would have only a limited life.

A severe shortage of trained staff exists in all areas of archive work, but most particularly the expert technicians who know how to store and preserve the materials. The only way a person can get training at the present time is through an internship at one of the major archives specializing in this work. In 1973 and again in 1976, the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) held a summer school for new and young archive personnel at the Staatliches Filmarchiv in the Deutsche Demokratische Republik on the subjects of preservation and catalogu-

ing. In 1977, FIAF organized a third summer school at the Danish Filmmuseum in Copenhagen on the subject of documentation. Attendance at these schools has so far been limited to personnel already employed in FIAF archives, but the FIAF schools might provide a starting point for future training of experts who would then be eligible for archive work.

The task of preserving television programs and videotape is so enormous that it threatens to swamp the work of the existing film archives now engaged in the urgent task of copying nitrate film. Most of them have begun to collect such materials to a small degree, but have not yet been able to begin the work of making master copies. No major television archive is yet in existence, although there are a few small collections in specialized areas and the new copyright law to become effective in 1978 specifically gives the Library of Congress a mandate to start one. The film archives have not yet found their proper role concerning the preservation of television material. They are painfully aware that the situation for television is similar to that of nitrate film not so many years ago, and that much of it is being lost today.



## Film Study

The study of film includes learning how to make, view, and analyze film, as well as a consideration of theoretical, historical and cultural issues of the moving image in all its many modes. It includes courses and programs for all age groups, courses conducted both within and outside the institutions of formal education. Although film education involves the student in all modes of symbolic expression and communication, especially those of the other arts, its principal aim is to supply programs that serve both the specialized needs of professionals as well as those of people seeking a general cultural education.

There need be no exhaustive recapitulation of the history of film and television study in the schools for the purpose of this report, but it is useful to summarize the main developments in film education.

One can distinguish between teaching other subjects *through film* and teaching *about* film. In his important essay "The Uses of Film in Education and Communication," Sol Worth mentions that film has been used for educational purposes since the invention of the cinema.<sup>10</sup> By 1905, German anthropologists were showing films about "primitive" people to their students, and by 1907, films of humans in motion were being used to teach various subjects in medical and art schools. Film has continued to be an important form of instruction, and also an important ethnographic tool, as a way of documenting experience. Television, too, has become a significant instructional medium, ubiquitous in primary and secondary classes since the 1950s.

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<sup>10</sup>Sol Worth, "The Uses of Film in Education and Communication," in David R. Olson, ed., *Media and Symbols: The Forms of Expression, Communication and Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 271-302.

This report is more concerned with study about film. Such courses were introduced into the United States grade schools in 1918 and have been part of high school and college curricula since the late 1920s and early 1930s. But neither film nor television studies achieved their current strength until the 1960s. By the 1970s a panel of youth would report to the President of the United States that a new, distinct subgroup composed of young people existed in American society: "There is one major change in society in recent years that is more responsible than any other for the increased deviation (from earlier, adult norms). This is a change in communications."<sup>11</sup> Hitherto, communications among the young had been largely restricted to face-to-face contact, but in the 1960s, super-8, 16-mm film, and half-inch videotape suddenly blossomed into use for a variety of causes and purposes. Mass trends spread through the youth population with amazing speed by way of the magic of television. Fads and movements, which would have been previously localized, became the objects of national attention.

### The Colleges and Universities

At the end of the nineteenth century, the colleges and universities—and high schools as well—began to include the study of vernacular literature in their curricula, which had until that time included Latin and Greek classics almost exclusively.

The study of film is analogous to the study of English literature, in the sense that they both began as studies of popular culture, more or less, then gradually developed more sophisticated dimensions and methodologies. While the study of English literature has achieved this respectability, film study is only beginning to do so. Neither English literature nor film study, however, stands on a centuries old tradition, but it is certainly the case that English literature, once only a form of popular culture, is now thought of as a serious academic enterprise while film study has only recently begun to achieve this status. Film study does build, however, on the humanistic tradition which has placed literature and the arts at the center of a liberal education.

The study of film made its first appearance at the colleges in the late 1920s, but did not achieve great importance. This was because of misunderstanding of the impact of film, because of its excessive cost, and finally, because of the impact of the Second World War defense effort. However, the war would eventually heighten the development of film. Troops returning from war were extremely sensitive to the

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<sup>11</sup>James C. Coleman, *Youth, Transition to Adulthood* (Chicago: University Press, 1974), p. 119.



medium, having spent their war years trained and entertained by films. In the postwar years film study resumed very slowly and became an organized academic discipline only in the 1960s. It must be continually remembered that there are still citizens among us whose life history encompasses the whole history of film.

At the current time, the study of film is still very gradually emerging from its traditional role as a narrative or dramatic form relating to literary fiction and the performance of plays. The first Ph.D. program in film study, under the auspices of the Department of Cinema Studies at New York University, was inaugurated as recently as 1971 by the late George Amberg. But in the last five years the number of courses and programs offered has increased dramatically.

The American Film Institute's *Guide to College Courses in Film and Television* (1973 edition) listed 613 colleges and universities offering courses in film or television. The next edition (1975) listed 791 schools offering such courses. A total of 8,225 courses, with 2,622 faculty members teaching media courses, were offered at the 791 schools. The guide isolates 240 schools offering extensive film or television programs, and offering 281 film-related degrees to over 30,869 students majoring in film or television. Of those schools offering a film program, the majority report that film production is their primary emphasis, with film history and criticism second, and educational media third. According to the reports, the majority of the schools view documentary filmmaking as the most important aspect of film production, with avantgarde film second, and narrative third.

The Land Report speaks of film education as an area where "confusion reigns," and takes note of its problems, including: no accepted curriculum standards; no departmental pattern; the struggle between departments; and the lack of status of film departments. The multiplicity of approaches to film education and the resulting apparent confusion have much to do with the history of film education in America, the nature of academic institutions, and the important fact that the film medium lends itself to study from a variety of viewpoints. The nature of the approach a school chooses is often dictated by the context in which film education occurs at that school. Thus, for instance, a filmmaking curriculum within a school of communication will be heavily weighted toward the training of documentary filmmakers. The film study program in such a school is likely to stress film as a part of a larger communication context. On the other hand a filmmaking program in an art department is more likely to stress film as a means of personal expression. Film study within such a department is likely to concern itself more with the relation between film and the other arts and to emphasize the plastic nature of the moving image medium. When the

study of film occurs within departments of English there is likely to be an emphasis upon plot, characterization, and theme.

In the late 1960s this diversity began to have positive results. With the large growth in the interest in film, and the proliferation of books and periodicals dealing with film, the approaches of many individuals expanded, so that film education began to encompass broader aspects of the medium. A greater exchange between the various approaches developed, so that the recent university graduate with a degree in film is likely to have a more well-rounded view of the medium than any of his or her individual teachers.

The interaction of these various ideologies has produced a situation in which film education at the college level is represented by varying numbers of courses and instructors in varying contexts. There is nothing in this situation that is meant to indicate that one approach is superior to another, when each approach is pursued with the proper amount of sophistication and seriousness.

This situation is not strikingly different from the status of many disciplines where differing approaches exist throughout the field. One expects to find, for instance, that the field of history includes not only a number of very different departments at different universities, but also that large departments incorporate several approaches, and that specialized histories, such as the history of science or the history of philosophy, exist within other departments.

The recent development of film and television study has been the result of several factors: (1) the rise of television and the resulting familiarity with visual communication, (2) the use of film by serious artists for popular audiences, particularly in Europe, (3) the marketing of lightweight film and video equipment which many individuals could afford, (4) the sharp increase in student interest common in the two media.

One can then summarize the status of film study in the United States by citing several levels on which film and television study seem to situate themselves.

Undergraduate and graduate courses and programs in film, television, and video (the term used to specify noncommercial artistic uses of the medium) are available in hundreds of American colleges and universities. The range is from single courses to elaborate and sophisticated professional programs. Students take the courses to prepare themselves for professional careers in the media and other students take the courses in order to satisfy a personal interest, a desire to understand, with no intention of pursuing a career in the fields.

In addition to these programs at colleges and universities there are hundreds of workshops, continuing education courses, and other similar

opportunities for people who are not regular students to learn the production techniques needed in film and television. Again the people who take these courses may be professionally oriented or they may simply have no interest in the media. Many high schools and some primary schools have courses and programs in film and television production.

Courses and programs in film study run the gamut from very complete doctoral programs at a few universities to single courses which survey film history and/or teach film appreciation. In between there are numbers of courses which focus on various aspects of film, analyzing the medium as a means of understanding values, human behavior, artistic expression, psychology, social dynamics, politics, etc. Some of the people who take these courses plan to make a career out of teaching, research, and publication in the field. Others take the courses simply out of desire to understand the medium and its impact upon themselves and others.

Film study, even more than the study of filmmaking, is ardently pursued outside the usual academic environment. Courses and programs exist at museums, libraries, in continuing education programs and other similar places. Many courses also exist in primary schools and high schools. While some people take the courses in order to expand their knowledge and understanding of the medium itself, most people probably want a better understanding of the thoughts and feelings expressed through films.

There is less attention to television study, except when it is examined as a part of popular culture. More often, the study of television is a part of a larger interest in communication, particularly mass communication. There are undergraduate and graduate programs in these areas.

The study of film and television and the study of film and television making would seem to be inseparable and, in most situations, that is the case. People who wish to be filmmakers, for instance, and who are training in professional production programs are led to a thorough acquaintance with the history of the cinema as a way of understanding the traditions out of which current cinema evolved. The reverse is less often the case. Students of film, television and video who are interested in the history, theory and criticism of these media are less often required to have much, if any, knowledge of production. It is not uncommon for a person to have received a Ph.D. in Mass Communication or in Cinema Studies with very little experience with television and/or film production.

There are, of course, many situations where an attempt is made to create strong programs in both research and production, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Other programs emphasize one over

the other. Newer programs in media studies, more broadly conceived, give equal attention to the study and making of film and video. These studies view film and video within the wide context of the other arts and symbolic code systems and focus on their relationship to the evolution of human consciousness and culture.

This extremely broad sketch of film and video study in America can be summarized by saying that film and video study has grown quickly in recent years, permeating almost every learning situation, that this film and video study has become increasingly sophisticated, and that such study runs that gamut from professional training in the media to training which uses the media as a way of focusing on other kinds of human experience — historical, political, literary, dramatic, social, economic, and psychological.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

### Independent Film Needs a Distinct Public Image

The entertainment industry so dominates the public notion of what is film that scant attention has been paid in the United States to the growth of independent film. This dominance has produced a monumental cultural legacy unequaled in any other nation, but it has simultaneously resulted in the neglect of the social and cultural application of the moving image mediums. The exceedingly successful commercial exploitation of film and television has increased the need to nurture the cultural and social aspects of these technologies.

The generations educated prior to the Second World War had little experience with film or television except as entertainment. Individuals born since the war are accustomed to film and television permeating every aspect of their lives. This distinction is evidenced by the demand on educational institutions, foundations and government agencies to provide support for film and video, and the general difficulty these organizations have had in developing effective media programs. This discord is often attributed to broad issues such as the preservation of traditional educational or cultural values. However, the specific cause, as is discussed in the text, is the massive growth of educational technology and nontheatrical film immediately following the Second World War, and the concurrent decline of motion pictures as the preeminent entertainment industry.

This situation places a special burden on the independent film community. It is without professional organizations, legislative repre-

sentation or institutionalized sources of financial backing. In its brief history it has not developed the support systems which stabilize and professionalize. Independent filmmaking is, to a great extent, free of extensive commercialization and, therefore, lacks the crystalizing interest in profit which is the basis of most professional organizations.

Independent film has often been its own worst enemy. It is a community of individualists. Internecine squabbling and factionalism have admittedly made it more difficult to attract the support of established institutions. Foundations, both public and private, have been uneasy with the raucous nature of independent film when compared with the limited risk involved in supporting traditional, more organized art forms.

But the situation has begun to show signs of change. Independent film and videomakers have recently founded service organizations in a number of cities. The common goal of these organizations is to provide services, such as equipment and screenings, and representation to the membership. Some, such as the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers in New York, have taken an active role in representing their membership at governmental hearings. Such organizations are the first step in the maturation of the independent film and video communities. Most cut directly across the various factions, and, though the organizations vary in sophistication, they are a pragmatic approach to the problem of identity.

These organizations need the support and recognition of those able to make decisions affecting the vitality and nature of film and video in the United States.

Equal to the need for outside support is the necessity for filmmakers to act in their own behalf. Just as has been done in the other arts, filmmakers must present cogent arguments for increased support and must marshal public opinion in their behalf. Ultimately, it will be the energies of the constituency which will determine whether these organizations gain national recognition as the spokesmen for a vital sector of the communications and cultural aspects of American society, or are assimilated into institutionally based, non-profit organizations.

A step towards stability and professionalism would be the establishing of training programs. Filmmakers, film curators, archivists and exhibitors are to a large extent self-trained. The transfer of skills from one generation to another is haphazard. The qualified individual does not have an established course of entry into a career. It is presently a discouraging process, culling not only those who lack the stamina to persevere but also talented individuals who discover that greater rewards are easier to achieve in more prosaic professions.

## **The Growth of Independent Film is Dependent on the Expansion of Exhibition**

Production, distribution and study are all reliant on exhibition to fuel the system. Funds spent on exhibition programs pay multiple dividends as they both expand the audience and provide income for filmmakers.

It should be made clear that no inference is being made that the funds available for production are adequate. Such funds are meager at best. Intense competition exists for what funding is available. Many worthy projects are lost because of the expense and complexity of raising funding. Most good films are the result of personal sacrifice by the filmmaker. However, without expanded exhibition it is impossible to argue for the substantial increase of funds for production.

Over the past decade, exhibitors of independent film, though chronically underfunded, have proven surprisingly stable. Growth has been slow but steady. Of particular importance are those programs, such as the Whitney Museum and the Film Forum, which make it a practice to deal directly with filmmakers, pay reasonable fees for films and do efficient jobs of publicizing programs. Theaters are not the only form of exhibition which provide support for filmmakers. All forms of exhibition as defined in the body of the report, including classroom use, seminars for professionals and lecture series for the public, expand the film audience and produce income for filmmakers.

It is possible to view the independent film system abstractly with production as a constant, distribution as a dependent variable and exhibition as the determinant variable. Production is a constant because it is normally in a state of oversupply. Though distributors yearn for "good" films, filmmakers are forced into self-distribution in increasing numbers as the only means to effectively enter the marketplace. Distribution, the only aspect of independent film where profit incentive is the norm, grows and declines in direct proportion to the market. Distributors are most ready to adapt to change. Profits are extremely sensitive to fluctuations in exhibition.

The obvious fault in the system is the inability of exhibition programs to be self-supporting. Time and energy are needed to carefully program films. Fees to filmmakers are usually a substantial portion of exhibition budgets. Commercial theaters avoid these costs by doing little or no active programming and by paying producers a percentage of receipts, usually after costs are deducted.

Any expectation that noncommercial film programs will show a profit is to confuse the Hollywood image of films with the realities of the independent film community. It is no more reasonable to expect good film exhibition programs to pay their own way than it is to view the

wealth apparent in popular music and to therefore expect symphony orchestras to be self-supporting. If we want good film to be available to the general public then we must actively support good exhibition programs.

### **Independent Film Must be Protected and Supported by Government Agencies**

It is the view of this report that a healthy and productive independent film community is essential to the well-being of the United States. The dominance of the moving image mediums as the primary source of information and education in a nation of individuals trained from early childhood to be receptive to information so presented, makes it inconceivable that the ideal of a free exchange of views can exist within a communications industry controlled by commercial interests. Not only is the dominance of these commercial interests antithetical to free communications, but their unchallenged financial health and massive popular appeal gives them the unequivocal control over what is seen, and therefore commonplace and true, and what is not seen, and therefore obscure and misunderstood.

The protections granted the printed word in the Constitution have generally been extended to film and television. Though debate is current on questions as to the amount of violence acceptable in television programming or the extent to which explicit sex is acceptable in any medium, censorship is generally recognized as an undesirable restriction of guaranteed freedoms.

The primary difference between the high technology communications systems (film and television) and the printed word are the *de facto* restrictions caused by inherent limits on who may produce films or video tapes and who may have access to the systems of distribution and exhibition. Film and video are far more expensive and far more complex mediums than print. But they have become the primary mediums of communication in our society. And it is only in the independent aspects of the mediums that a dissenting voice can find free expression.

The moving image mediums, unlike print, need specialized and expensive equipment to interpret the recorded material so that it can be received by the public. While it remains theoretically possible for a single individual with a statement to make to write, publish and distribute a book or pamphlet, no matter how small the press run, it remains virtually impossible for a single concerned individual to produce, distribute and exhibit a film or video tape. This limit on the freedom of communication is profoundly increased by the technological function of exhibition, which, in the case of television,



is limited to a relatively small number of outlets licensed by the federal government.

No suggestion is made that the individuals involved in the commercial communications industry are pernicious, or that the system is not an effective means of providing mass entertainment of reasonable quality at a low cost. What we are stating is that the independent aspects of the mediums, those aspects used for education, social welfare and art, must be viewed separately and apart; and that within the government exists the means of insuring the growth and vitality of film and video outside of the mass entertainment environment through the enlightened use of available resources.

In the body of the report, we have discussed the close relationship between independent film and governmental and nonprofit organizations. Both the production and the use of independent film rely heavily on government support. It was also noted that the government was the single largest producer of nontheatrical film.

Independent film is therefore particularly sensitive to changes in policy by the federal government. It can be stabilized or devastated by slight changes in funding patterns, regulations or administrative decisions. Though few filmmakers may actually produce directly for the government, and the independent filmmaker may be at a substantial disadvantage when competing for the government dollar, the amounts of money infused into the system by programs such as the National Defense Education Act are so substantial that it eventually filters through to the farthest corners of the independent film community.

Lawmakers and influential private and public institutions are just beginning to see beyond the entertainment image of film. They have too often confused the Hollywood myth with the realities of filmmaking. Their perspective has been slow to change from the capital and labor intensive past to the flexible and efficient reality of modern lightweight equipment and small crews.

Historically, public questions regarding film have been decided as if the entertainment industry were the only aspect to be considered. It is not difficult to isolate examples of this mode of thought:

A. The federal government has no coherent policy devoted to preserving freedom of communications in a technological environment. No panel has been established within the government to represent the interests of noncommercial users of film and video. No agency such as the National Film Board of Canada exists to support the use of film for social change and to serve as a center for independent film. Existing regulatory agencies, such as the Federal Communications Commission, function primarily to stabilize the use of the airwaves to permit the orderly conduct of business.

B. The tax advantages of film investment are increased and decreased with no consideration of the special need to encourage investment in educational or cultural films, or of the need to increase the support of the early works of narrative filmmakers.

C. The American Film Institute, the closest thing the United States has to a national film organization, is primarily concerned with the celebration of the feature-film industry and has proven particularly unsuited to representing the independent film community.

A pending decision that may have substantial effects is now under consideration by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB): an extensive review of federal contracting procedures for audio visual production. The decision has already been made to discontinue direct production by the government of films and video tapes. In fiscal 1976, government agencies produced 1053 films using in-house facilities. The remaining questions concern the development of a standardized bidding process and determining who will be eligible to bid on government projects. In the past the formalities of bidding have favored large production companies able to conform to rigid specifications based on an archaic view of filmmaking.

Though a filmmaker working on a government contract would not consider himself independent, the flow of income would provide a base on which a filmmaker could undertake totally independent production. Such an infusion of earned income into the independent film community, in addition to the grants currently available, would add much to its health and stability.

Obviously, it is unreasonable to expect the communications industry to relinquish control of a lucrative marketplace. However, it is not inconceivable that limits can be set on the commercialization of communications and on centralized control, that priorities in the public's interest can be clearly defined and that these priorities, once defined, can be effectively nurtured and supported by legislation and the judicious use of funds available in the government.

### **Independent Film Poses Significant Problems for the Established Media Systems**

The primary systems of delivery for both film and television are controlled by a limited number of distributors and exhibitors. Independent film exists in the periphery as defined by the areas of interest of those organizations. It is not just the centralized control exercised by a few individuals which creates barriers for small, independent producers, but artificial standards and conventions which make it almost impossible for the independent to enter the primary marketplace.

It is not uncommon to hear important figures in theatrical film exhibition or television speak of their interest in discovering new talent and in encouraging independent production. In most cases, the interest is sincere. Unfortunately the environment of the communications industry is simply not conducive to the entry of independent producers.

The profit potential of low-budget films is not large enough to interest either the financial backing of investors or the support of distributors. Despite the occasional exception, the trend is towards ever higher budgets in the search for ever higher profit multiples. In the long run there is reason to hope that the product shortage will reach the point at which exhibitors are willing to accept films from irregular sources. But, it is impossible to rely on the occasional cyclic extension of the commercial marketplace into the world of the independent to fuel production.

Network television, with its limited air time, prefers programming with the broadest audience potential. Private stations are overly dependent on syndication for local programming. Both public and private stations are insistent that programming have a series format. Movie theaters insist that films be at least 90 minutes long and in color. All of these conventions make it difficult for the independent to enter the marketplace. Neither series nor 90-minute films lend themselves to small budgets or creative exploration. These formats discourage controversy and reduce all programming to single-sentence concepts.

In addition to the problems of format, networks and local television stations must exercise tight controls over programming broadcast on federally licensed airwaves. Nothing must be done to endanger the franchise, or the support of sponsors and subscribers. Therefore, station managers must set boundaries within which creativity can be permitted.

Both private and public television stations maintain in-house production staffs and are committed to the support of these individuals and to the amortization of equipment. Independent production jeopardizes the status and power implicit in the development of these capabilities.

Perhaps most disappointing are the fees paid by public television for the broadcast of independent films. Local stations rarely pay anything for the use of a film. Network broadcast usually pays less than \$200 per minute of film: far below the cost of production.

Public Television has greater potential than any of the private networks for experimentation with new formats of programming. Unfortunately, financial realities have made this particularly problematic. Though they are nonprofit in the truest sense of the word, these stations are as dependent on the approval of their funding sources as are their commercial counterparts. They are equally as vulnerable to the vagaries of taste and necessarily follow the programming techniques

which are most satisfactory in attracting funds from Congress, from corporate sponsors and from subscribers.

Over the past decade, public television has proven itself a viable alternative to commercial programming. Now it is necessary for public television to receive additional secure funding to make innovation a basic part of its activities. Funds should be set aside for this purpose and channeled to the producers in such a way that new ideas can be tested without jeopardizing the health of basic, ongoing programming.

### **The Tools of Filmmaking Will Become Accessible to a Large Segment of the American Population**

The technological advances which developed inexpensive and lightweight 16-mm equipment have continued to produce simpler and more dependable tools for filmmaking. Over the past few years methods for using 8-mm film and half-inch video tape for commercial purposes have been developed. The continued refinement of production methods will substantially increase the accessibility of production skills to individuals whose primary training is not in film or television. It is becoming ever more commonplace to find doctors, teachers, neighborhood groups and professional organizations producing their own films.

It is not difficult to understand how the technologies which have reduced the size of the calculator and computer will have application to filmmaking and electronic image recording. In the very near future, the last vestiges of separation between professional and amateur production equipment should begin to disappear. Extensive training and large amounts of capital should no longer be prerequisites to the production of commercially viable films or video tapes.

These developments hold the promise of vastly expanded worldwide communications. However, this will not come about without assistance. Commercial interests will naturally move to block the proliferation of production ability. "Professional standards" can be set still further beyond the reach of the average citizen. Other arbitrary restrictions, including membership in professional organizations, can be imposed on the communications system. It is also possible that key pieces of hardware will remain beyond the means of the individual producer. As has happened in the past, new amateur gauges can be developed to prevent confusion in the marketplace.

It is the view of this report that the goal of free communications will have to be actively sought. Two immediate actions are recommended:

1. Financial support must be made available to the research and development of lightweight, simplified, production equipment. Funding organizations which support the development

of independent film and video must support the development of "amateur" hardware with the capability of producing a professional product.

2. Equipment must be made available through community resource centers. The continuing necessity to amortize the cost of equipment through almost constant use makes the establishing of centers where cameras, editing machines and other equipment can be used for noncommercial purposes a viable means of bridging the technological gap.

### **Video Holds Great Portent for the Future**

Speculation on the future of independent film is incomplete without a consideration of the potential of video to totally alter the medium as we now know it. Video, by which we infer any means of electronically recording an image, is far more sensitive to the advances of electronic technology than is film. One can easily conceive of a totally self-contained video system of professional quality, including playback and record functions, no larger than an 8-mm camera. It is possible to envision developments in the transmission of images permitting direct broadcast and reception of signals from the home station, opening the possibility of worldwide intercommunications with infinite programming and immediate access. Inherent in these developments are solutions to many of the problems outlined above.

Such systems would make every individual a producer and a consumer with organized distribution and exhibition necessary only for the provision of mass entertainment.

It is the strong recommendation of this report that a comprehensive study of video be undertaken. The goal of such a study should be the drawing of generally acceptable definitions, a review of the state of the art and educated projections of the video environment and its impact for the remainder of the century.

### **Advanced Archival Techniques are Urgently Needed**

If the great legacy of film and television in the 20th century is to be preserved, far more will have to be spent on current preservation activities and on research of new systems of preservation. Archival work currently relies on the skills and energies of a handful of devoted individuals working on extremely small budgets. Most major American archives have no funds for acquisition. Training programs are not well developed.

If we are to save films and tapes for future generations, a number of problems will have to be overcome: a method for the efficient preservation of color film must be found; additional storage vaults will have to be built; technicians and archivists will have to receive formal training; present collections will have to be catalogued; methods will have to be found to increase the shelf-life of video tape beyond the present estimate of 15 years.

### **Film Education is in a Period of Transition**

The rapid growth of film culture and filmmaking courses on all levels of the American educational system during the past decade has begun to produce a generation of film educators who are conversant in all aspects of the moving image mediums. The somewhat confused and haphazard approach to the medium is being replaced by carefully conceived and well-executed film programs. The teacher who was self-taught, as has been the case up to now, is being replaced by the skilled professional.

Recent university graduates with broad based film experience are moving into positions in museums, schools, colleges and other educational institutions, while graduates with degrees in other disciplines have gained a reasonable level of understanding of film as part of their general education. The result is that teachers of film are more secure in their disciplines, and their colleagues are far more accepting of the role of film within the academic community. It can be assumed that film education will emerge over the next few years as a major aspect of American education.

It is the view of this report that it is of the highest priority that our educational institutions train individuals to interpret and understand the moving image mediums. To deny the necessity of media literacy and to insist on the reliance of reading as the basic form of information is to deny the reality of the situation. Students must be taught to distinguish fact from fiction whether it is presented in books, on television or in film. They must be understanding of the ways in which television can fool them with simple tricks just as past generations have been taught to disbelieve much of what they read. Children must be taught tolerance for the nonentertainment aspects of film and television and to develop a taste for good film and good television. It is by training our youth that we seek to teach them to appreciate higher values, to understand the difference between art and popular culture, between productive use of time and leisure activities.

## Appendix I

Participants at the Conference on Regional Development of Film Center and Services Museum of Modern Art, New York City, and Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, New York.

February 13-15, 1973

Chloe Aaron  
Public Media Program  
National Endowment of the Arts

Camille Cook  
Film Center  
Art Institute of Chicago  
Chicago, Ill.

Tino Ballio  
Wisconsin Center for Theater  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisc.

Forrest Chisman  
Markle Foundation  
New York, N.Y.

James Blue  
Media Center  
Rice University  
Houston, Texas

Sally Dixon  
Carnegie Institute  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Eileen Bowser  
Film Department  
Museum of Modern Art  
New York, N.Y.

Diana Dreiman  
Film and T.V. Studies Center  
Los Angeles, Ca.

Hiram Garcia Borja  
Director General de  
Cinematográfica Jefatura  
Asunto: Cineteca National  
Secretaria de Gobernación  
Mexico, D.F.

Raymond Fielding  
School of Communications  
and Theater  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Peter Bradley  
New York State Council on the Arts  
New York, N.Y.

Peter Feinstein  
University Film Study Center  
Cambridge, Ma.

Dr. Edgar Breitenbach  
Prints and Photos Division  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

John Ford  
Kansas City Art Institute  
Kansas City, Mo.

Virgil Grillo  
University Film Committee  
University of Colorado  
Boulder, Colorado

Audley Grossman, Jr.  
Detroit Institute of Arts  
Detroit, Mich.

Denise Jacobson  
Portland Art Museum  
Portland, Or.

Sam Kula  
Archivist  
American Film Institute  
Washington, D.C.

Peggy Loar  
Indianapolis Museum of Art  
Indianapolis, Ind.

Cameron McCauley  
Extension Media Center  
University of California  
Berkeley, Ca.

Jonas Mekas  
Anthology Film Archives  
New York, N.Y.

Gerald O'Grady  
State University of New York  
Buffalo, N.Y.

Nancy Raines  
Public Media Program  
National Endowment for the Arts  
Washington, D.C.

Sheldon Renan  
Pacific Film Archives  
University Art Museum  
Berkeley, Ca.

Ron Sutton  
National Association of Media Educators  
Washington, D.C.

Dean Swanson  
Walker Art Center  
Minneapolis, Minn.

Willard Van Dyke  
Museum of Modern Art  
New York, N.Y.

Michael Webb  
American Film Institute  
Washington, D.C.

Peter Wood  
Rockefeller Foundation  
New York, N.Y.

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**Conference Director**

Barbara Van Dyke  
International Film Seminars  
New York, N.Y.

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## Appendix II

### Sites of Regional Meetings Held to Review Preliminary Draft:

American Film Institute  
Washington, D.C.

Donnell Library  
New York, N.Y.

Film Center  
School of the Art Institute  
Chicago, Ill.

Media Study/Buffalo  
Buffalo, N.Y.

Museum of Art (co-host)  
Carnegie Institute  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Pacific Film Archive  
Berkeley, Ca.

Pittsburgh Film-Makers, Inc. (co-host)  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Portland State University  
Portland, Or.

Rice Media Center  
Houston, Texas

South Carolina Arts Commission (co-host)  
Columbia, S.C.

Sinking Creek Film Celebration (co-host)  
Greenville, Tenna.

Rocky Mountain Film Center  
University of Colorado  
Boulder, Colo.

University Film Study Center  
(co-host)  
Cambridge, Ma.

Walker Art Center  
Minneapolis, Minn.

WGBH-TV (co-host)  
Boston, Ma.

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